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Stories from Asia Today

A Collection for Young Readers

Book One

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AFGHANISTAN

The Hawk and the Tree

by Ahazam Rahnaward Zaryab

For many long years a dead tree stood in our street. Nearby a cobbler had a small shop. He would open his shop early every morning and close it with a big lock at sunset each day. There were also two jobless men living on our street. I don't know why they had no jobs, but all they did every day was to sit loafing in the cobbler's shop, for all the world as though they were part of the furnishings.

One day when I passed the shop I noticed that the cobbler was not as happy and talkative as usual. He sat with a bowed

head as though deep in thought. The two loafers also looked dejected and sat thinking with bowed heads. For a moment I thought they might be mimicking the cobbler, and perhaps that's what it was—a very stupid imitation.

Thinking something bad had happened, I approached the shop and spoke to the cobbler. "What's the matter?" I asked.

Slowly the cobbler raised his head and looked at me. Usually there was a merry spark in his eyes, but now I could see only some mute, vague sadness in them. And the two loafers also were looking at me with a blank expression on their faces.

"My sparrow hawk—it's escaped," the cobbler said.

At his words my heart was filled with pleasure. "How'd it get away?" I asked, feeling still more pleased by the thought of the hawk's freedom.

The cobbler must have seen that I was pleased, for suddenly he broke into boisterous laughter. The two loafers quickly jointed in. There was some sort of vengeful rage in the way the cobbler was laughing.

"Why do you laugh?" I asked him.

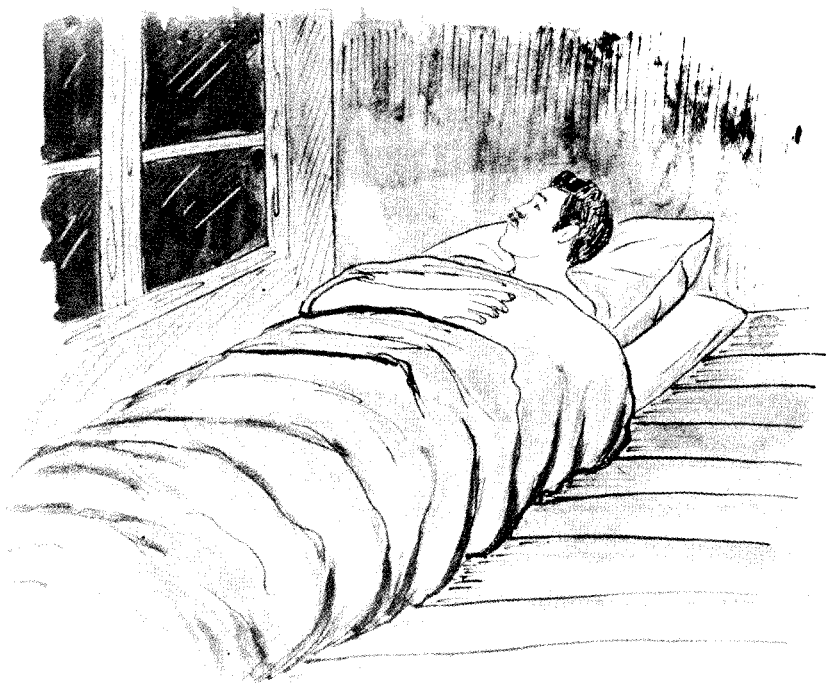
"Because, that damned hawk—it'll be dead soon enough," he said.

"Why should it die?" I asked.

"Because it still has a long string tied to its leg," he said, and the usual spark of merriment returned to his eyes. "Just as soon as that damned hawk lights in a tree, the string will get tangled in the branches, and the bird will be caught there until it dies." Again he laughed loudly and then added: "It's really a strong string; no bird can break it."

The pleasure in my heart had died, and I was filled with apprehension. The two loafers kept repeating the cobbler's words: "No bird can break it . . . no bird can break it."

"That hawk has carried its own death away with it," the cobbler said.



"You're very cruel," I said.

The spark was shining still brighter in his eyes. "I used to feed it live sparrows," he said. "It killed them and ate them gladly. But now it's flown away. I . . ."

I didn't wait to hear more but went on my way. His words kept echoing in my ears: "Because it still has a long string tied to its leg. It'll get tangled and the bird will be caught until it dies. It's a strong string: the hawk cannot break it . . . cannot break it . . ."

I had a bad night. I couldn't sleep. The gloomy darkness of the night pressed down upon my chest. Looking out the window, I saw the street sleeping in darkness. The black night had brought only gloom and grief. Again I tried to

sleep. But somewhere inside me a thought was growing. I tried to pull the thought into my consciousness, but no matter how I tried, it could not show itself. Some power was holding the thought back, keeping it in hiding. The thought kept struggling to free itself. The night was passing, and I was afire with some mysterious fever.

In time the darkness began to disappear. In a state somewhere between sleeping and waking, I began to see that the world was full of strings. Long strings and short strings. Our street too was full of strings. Thick strings and thin strings. But all too strong to be broken. And suddenly I saw that each string was tied to someone's foot. Every person had a string tied to his foot. I too had a string on my foot.

I woke up, trembling. It was morning. A noisy shouting came from the street. I went out and saw a crowd gathered under the dead tree near the cobbler's shop. The cobbler

too was there, dancing and shouting. When he saw me, he came dancing up to me and shouted: "See—I was right!"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Just come along," he said. Catching hold of my hand, he pulled me along to the dead tree, where he pointed to a branch and said: "Look! Just look!"

The sparrow hawk hung from one of the branches. The string on its foot was firmly caught in the tree, and the feathers the bird had shed in its death struggles were scattered all about. The bird was now quite dead. Its head hung down, and it was staring directly at me from lifeless eyes. It seemed I

could hear the bird speaking, saying bitterly: "This is the end of the road."

"See?" said the cobbler. "Didn't I tell you it would be dead soon?"

The crowd kept shouting and pointing at the dead bird. Their eyes seemed alight with a foolish joy and satisfaction. I thought they were exulting: "How good that it's the bird that's been hung, not us!"

I looked at the people's feet. All of them were tied by strings. Strong strings. The cobbler's feet were tied too. The strings were all made of round links, and each link was in the form of a word. The word was Ego.

I burst into laughter. "Why are you laughing?" they asked me. Instead of answering them, I laughed louder and louder, until my laughter seemed to fill the street.

"Why are you laughing?" the cobbler screamed in a loud, heavy voice.

"All of you—all of you have strings tied on your feet too," I answered.

Frightened, they all looked at their feet and then asked: "Where? What strings?"

But I didn't answer: I was looking at my own feet. There was a string tied to me too, made of little links reading Ego . . . Ego . . . Ego . . .

So the thought that had been imprisoned in my subconscious had finally broken free and revealed itself. Suddenly, all the world seemed ridiculous, and I burst into laughter again.

Then all of us were hanging from the branches of the dead tree, each caught fast by one foot. The cobbler hung beside me, his face close to mine, a sad face that seemed to be saying: "This is the end of the road." The two loafers hung nearby, their faces filled with the same sadness—a very stupid imitation.

I caught sight of the hawk hanging from another branch. 'Why has it returned?" I asked myself. But then I saw there was a second string on its foot, a string that stretched all the way to the cobbler's shop. And this string was made of live sparrows!

Translated by Wasef Bakhtari
Illustrated by Hashim Ghorbandi

BURMA

The Beautiful, Beautiful Heron

by Gayetni

Editors' Note. This story has been freely adapted in this translation. It originally appeared in the author's book Modern Short Stories for Young People, *which won first prize in the National Literary Awards for 1964. The thief Ngatetpya, who is mentioned at the end of the story, is a famous character in Burmese legends, a sort of Robin Hood who stole from the rich to give to the poor.*

One of my playmates and I were making little cows out of clay. The clay was sticky and smooth since it came from a white-ant hill; it didn't fall apart the way clay with sand in it does. It was the beginning of the rainy season, and there was a light drizzle. So we were modeling our clay in the shelter of a big tree.

Presently two of the older boys from the other side of the village came along. One of them was very strong, and he had the nickname of Kywe Gyi, which means Big Buffalo. He was carrying a live heron inside his shirt.

"Where'd you get the heron?" my friend asked Kywe Gyi. "Did you hit it with your slingshot?"

"Yes, I shot it down by the pond," answered Kywe Gyi.

"And I hit one too," said the other boy, "but it got away."

"Take it out and let me have a look at it," I said to Kywe Gyi.

Kywe Gyi pretended to be reluctant, but he finally took the bird out of his shirt. They'd tied it up with a vine so it couldn't get away. I took the bird in my hands and immedi-

ately fell in love with it. What a beauty! Its feathers were as white as milk, and its beak and legs were a lovely greenish blue. How wonderful, I thought, to have a heron for a pet! I was very fond of pets and at that time had a dog, a cat, and a big hen. The hen was just then sitting on fourteen eggs, and I was already looking forward to having many baby chicks when the eggs hatched. But now suddenly I could think of nothing except how very much I longed to have Kywe Gyi's beautiful heron.

Kywe Gyi could look at my face and tell what I was thinking. He said: "Do you want it for a pet?"

"Oh, yes!" I answered quickly. "Will you give it to me?"

"Sure, you can have it, but you must give me something in return. I want ten cigarettes." None of the boys in my group smoked, but Kywe Gyi and his friend were older and had already started smoking in secret.

"Oh, I want the heron very much, but I don't have any cigarettes," I said.

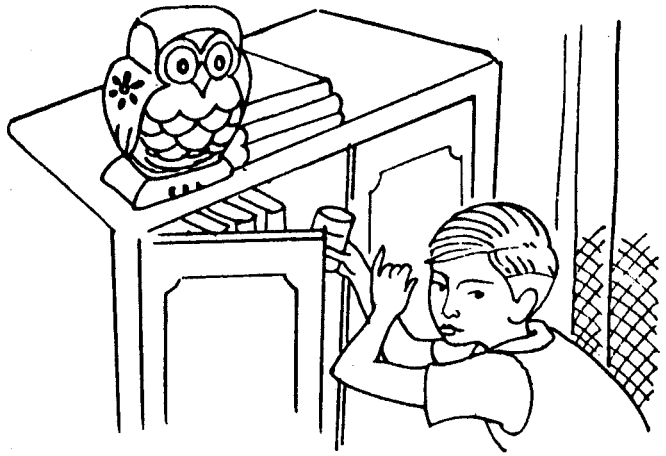
"But your aunt—the one who lives at your house—does, doesn't she? Get some of hers."

"Oh, she wouldn't give me any, and I wouldn't dare take them without asking. No, I couldn't do that. I'll give you some money instead."

"No, money won't do me any good. It's cigarettes we want. If you won't trade for cigarettes, we'll find someone who will."

I was overcome with disappointment at his words. Did I dare steal some of my aunt's cigarettes? No, that wouldn't be right, and surely I'd get a beating.

"Well, so long," said the other boy. And then Kywe Gyi took the heron out of my hands. The bird began beating its wings wildly as though it didn't want to leave me. My heart was beating hard; all I could think about was that somehow, anyhow, I simply had to have that heron.



"What do you think I should do?" I asked my friend. But he only shook his head and said I'd have to make up my own mind.

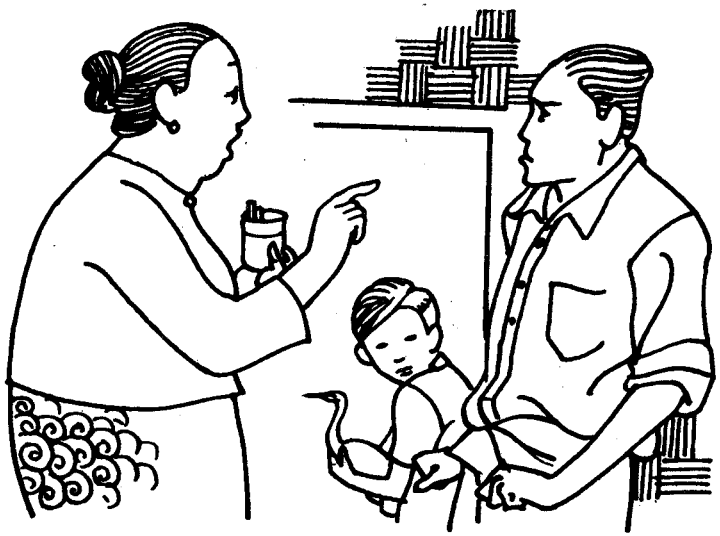
Kywe Gyi and his friend were walking away—taking the heron with them. It was still beating its wings and seemed to be calling to me. Suddenly I could stand it no longer.

"All right," I shouted, "it's a trade. Bring back the heron and I'll get the cigarettes."

Running to the house, I went straight upstairs to my aunt's book cupboard. With clay-covered hands, I took out the cigarette tin and counted out exactly ten cigarettes, which left the tin almost empty. Then I carefully put the tin back in its place and ran back to where the boys were waiting.

"Here," I said to Kwye Gyi, "here're ten cigarettes." He handed me the heron, and that's the way I became the proud owner of the most beautiful heron in the world.

I said goodbye to my friend and took the bird home. I made a cage for it out of an old box and some bamboo bars and gave it something to eat. Then I sat down and simply watched the lovely bird until after sundown, when I could hear voices in the kitchen, where supper was being made.



After supper I went back to my heron, but soon I became conscious of my aunt's scolding voice. "Who's been stealing my cigarettes?" she was saying. She asked everybody in turn, except me. She knew I didn't smoke and hence never imagined I could have taken her cigarettes.

Finally she decided the thief must be one of her younger brothers, my uncle San Aung, who also lived with us. She said that there were muddy fingerprints on the cigarette tin and that Uncle must have gotten his hands muddy when he went fishing that morning. And then she really started scolding him: you'd have thought she was accusing him of robbing a bank.

"But I did *not* take your cigarettes!" he kept saying. "Don't I always ask you if I want something of yours? Anyway, I now have plenty of my own. Look, here's my pack, almost full."

"But it must have been you," my aunt said. "Who else could it have been?"

"Well, I didn't to[illegible]h your old cigarettes."

"You're telling me a lie. You're a thief, that's what you are! Don't ever ask me for anything again."

Now Uncle San Aung was like an elder brother to me. As I listened to my aunt's scolding words I became more and more ashamed. Uncle was being called a thief and a liar because of something I had done. Actually, even though I hadn't thought of it as being so bad, I was the real thief, and if I now kept silent, wouldn't I be a sort of liar as well? Can't even silence be a kind of lie?

My aunt kept screaming at Uncle San Aung, and I could tell that he was getting more and more angry. His face was deep red, and I was afraid he was actually going to hit his sister. What a thing that would have been!

I ran into the room where they were and spoke quickly. "Please forgive me, Aunt, but I'm the one who took your cigarettes."

"What?" My aunt and uncle both spoke at the same time.

"I wanted a heron for a pet so badly, and ten cigarettes

was the price. I just had to have that heron," I said, trying to make them understand.

"Who ever heard of such a thing?" screamed my aunt. "Becoming a thief just for an old heron."

And Uncle joined in the scolding. "Just a common thief!" he said. "Aren't you ashamed! And just for an old heron."

"No, no," I told them. "It's a beautiful, beautiful heron. I just had to have it." But I could see they didn't understand. "Why didn't you ask me?" said my aunt.

"I was afraid you'd say no."

"Well, anyone that doesn't have the courage to tell the truth is a coward as well as being a liar."

"I promise never to do it again," I said.

"All right," my aunt said, lighting one of her remaining cigarettes and beginning to smile a little. "This time I'll forgive you. But don't you ever do such a thing again, or I'll have to start calling you Ngatetpya because you'll surely grow up to be as big a thief as he was.

"No, no, Aunt, please don't. Now that I've told the truth, I'm not really a thief, am I? I'm not like Ngatetpya, am I?"

"No, you're not a thief," she said, patting my shoulder and smiling broadly. "Come on, then, show Uncle and me this beautiful, beautiful heron." And she laughed out loud.

As the three of us walked toward the heron's pen, I told myself once more: "No, I'll never, never be like Ngatetpya!"

Translated by Tekkatho Mya Thway
Illustrated by U Sein

INDIA

Madam Rides the Bus

by Vallikkannan

There was a girl named Valliammai who was called Valli for short. She was eight years old and very curious about things. Her favorite pastime was standing in the front doorway of her house, watching what was happening in the street outside. There were no playmates of her own age on her street, and this was about all she had to do.

But for Valli, standing at the front door was every bit as enjoyable as any of the elaborate games other children play. Watching the street gave her many new, unusual experiences. Once a foreign soldier went past, and she watched him as he came near her house. What fair skin he had! Such nice clothes he wore! Women smiled as he passed them and tried to catch his glance. But some children, and even a few grown-ups, were scared by the sight of the soldier and hid inside their houses. Not Valli. She clicked her heels, saluted smartly, and said: "Salaam."

The soldier stopped and smiled at her. "And a good morning to you," he said, and then he went on his way.

Valli's joy knew no bounds. She yelled, and she danced, boasting to everybody that the fair-skinned soldier had actually spoken to her.

"Very brave she is, this one," said the neighbors. Her importance among the people on her street increased considerably.

Now, it is true that ordinarily there wasn't much traffic by her house, but this in no way meant that events didn't

happen in the neighborhood. Now and then, for example, she could see a neighbor coming or going on some errand or other. Occasionally a bullock cart would pass by, its wheels creaking and groaning for want of oil, and the bells tied around the animals' necks made a gentle tinkling sound. Sometimes a dog would dart across the street, pretending to be very busy; suddenly it would slow down, sniff around, and lift a leg to wet some wayside plant, and then go rushing back down the street as though it had forgotten something somewhere and wanted to fetch it. And then, of course, there were the beggars, and the street vendors . . . Oh, there was certainly no lack of entertainment for Valli as she stood watching from her doorstep all day long.

The most fascinating thing of all was the bus that traveled between her village and the nearest town. It passed through her street each hour, once going to the town and once coming back. The sight of the bus, filled each time with a new set of passengers, was a source of unending joy for Valli.

Day after day she watched the bus, and gradually a tiny wish crept into her head and grew there: she wanted to ride on that bus, even just once. This wish became stronger and stronger, until it was an overwhelming desire. Valli would stare wistfully at the people who got on or off the bus when it stopped at the street corner. Their faces would kindle in her longings, dreams, and hopes. If one of her friends happened to ride the bus and tried to describe the sights of the town to her, Valli would be too jealous to listen and would shout, in English: "Proud! proud!" Neither she nor her friends really understood the meaning of the word, but they used it often as a slang expression of disapproval.

Over many days and months Valli listened carefully to conversations between her neighbors and people who regularly used the bus, and she also asked a few discreet questions here and there. This way she picked up various small details

about the bus journey. The town was six miles from her village. The fare was thirty paise one way—"which is almost nothing at all," she heard one well-dressed man say, but to Valli, who scarcely saw that much money from one month to the next, it seemed a fortune. The trip to the town took forty-five minutes. On reaching town, if she stayed in her seat and paid another thirty paise, she could return home on the same bus. This meant that she could take the one-o'clock afternoon bus, reach the town at one forty-five, and be back home by about two forty-five. . . .

On and on went her thoughts as she calculated and recalculated, planned and replanned. . . .

Well, one fine spring day the afternoon bus was just on the point of leaving the village and turning into the main highway when a small voice was heard shouting: "Stop the bus! Stop the bus!" And a tiny hand was raised commandingly.

The bus slowed down to a crawl, and the conductor, sticking his head out the door, said: "Hurry then! Tell whoever it is to come quickly."

"It's *me,*" shouted Valli. "I'm the one who has to get on."

By now the bus had come to a stop, and the conductor said: "Oh, really! You don't say so!"

"Yes, I simply have to go to town," said Valli, still standing outside the bus, "and here's my money." She showed him some coins.

"Okay, okay, but first you must get on the bus," said the conductor, and he stretched out a hand to help her up.

"Never mind," she said, "I can get on by myself. You don't have to help me."

The conductor was a jolly sort, fond of joking. "Oh, please don't be angry with me, my fine madam," he said. "Here, have a seat right up there in front. Everybody move aside please—make way for madam."

It was the slack time of day, and there were only six or seven passengers on the bus. They were all looking at Valli and laughing with the conductor. Valli was overcome with shyness. Avoiding everyone's eyes, she walked quickly to an empty seat and sat down.

"May we start now, madam?" the conductor asked, smiling. Then he blew his whistle twice, and the bus moved forward with a roar.

It was a new bus, its outside painted a gleaming white with some green stripes along the sides. Inside, the overhead bars shone like silver. Directly in front of Valli, above the windshield, there was a beautiful clock. The seats were soft and luxurious.

Valli devoured everything with her eyes. But when she started to look outside, she found her view cut off by a canvas blind that covered the lower part of her window. So she stood up on the seat and peered over the blind.

The bus was now going along the bank of a canal. The road was very narrow. On one side there was the canal and, beyond it, palm trees, grassland, distant mountains, and the blue, blue sky. On the other side was a deep ditch and then acres and acres of green fields—green, green, green, as far as the eye could see.

Oh, it was all so wonderful!

Suddenly she was startled by a voice. "Listen, child," said the voice, "you shouldn't stand like that. Sit down."

Sitting down, she looked to see who had spoken. It was an elderly man who had honestly been concerned for her, but she was annoyed by his attention.

"There's nobody here who's a child," she said haughtily. "I've paid my thirty paise like everyone else."

The conductor chimed in. "Oh, sir, but this is a very grown-up madam. Do you think a mere girl could pay her own fare and travel to the city all alone?"

Valli shot an angry glance at the conductor and said: "I am not a madam. Please remember that. And you've not yet given me my ticket."

"I'll remember," the conductor said, mimicking her tone. Everyone laughed, and gradually Valli too joined in the laughter.

The conductor punched a ticket and handed it to her. "Just sit back and make yourself comfortable. Why should you stand when you've paid for a seat?"

"Because I want to," she answered, standing up again.

"But if you stand on the seat, you may fall and hurt yourself when the bus makes a sharp turn or hits a bump. That's why we want you to sit down, child."

"I'm *not* a child, I tell you," she said, irritably. "I'm eight years old."

"Of course, of course. How stupid of me! Eight years—my!"

The bus stopped, some new passengers got on, and the conductor got busy for a time. Afraid of losing her seat, Valli finally sat down.

An elderly woman came and sat beside her. "Are you all alone, dear?" she asked Valli as the bus started again.

Valli found the woman absolutely repulsive—such big holes she had in her ear lobes, and such ugly earrings in them! And she could smell the betel nut the woman was chewing and see the betel juice that was threatening to spill over her lips at any moment. Ugh!—who could be sociable with such a person?

"Yes, I'm traveling alone," she answered curtly. "And I've got a ticket too."

"Yes, she's on her way to town," said the conductor. "With a thirty-paise ticket."

"Oh, why don't you mind your own business," said Valli. But she laughed all the same, and the conductor laughed too.

But the old woman went on with her drivel. "Is it proper for

such a young person to travel alone? Do you know exactly where you're going in town? What's the street? What's the house number?"

"You needn't bother about me. I can take care of myself," Valli said, turning her face toward the window and staring out.

Her first journey—what careful, painstaking, elaborate plans she had had to make for it! She had thriftily saved whatever stray coins came her way, resisting every temptation to buy peppermints, toys, balloons, and the like, and finally she had saved a total of sixty paise. How difficult it had been, particularly that day at the village fair, but she had resolutely stifled a strong desire to ride the merry-go-round, even though she had the money.

After she had enough money saved, her next problem was how to slip out of the house without her mother's knowledge. But she managed this without too much difficulty. Every day after lunch her mother would nap from about one to four or so. Valli always used these hours for her "excursions" as

she stood looking from the doorway of her house or sometimes even ventured out into the village; today, these same hours could be used for her first excursion outside the village.

The bus rolled on, now cutting across a bare landscape, now rushing through a tiny hamlet or past an odd wayside shop. Sometimes the bus seemed on the point of gobbling up another vehicle that was coming toward them or a pedestrian crossing the road. But lo! somehow it passed on smoothly, leaving all obstacles safely behind. Trees came running toward them but then stopped as the bus reached them and simply stood there helpless for a moment by the side of the road before rushing away in the other direction.

Suddenly Valli clapped her hands with glee. A young cow, tail high in the air, was running very fast, right in the middle of the road, right in front of the bus. The bus slowed to a crawl, and the driver sounded his horn loudly again and again. But the more he honked, the more frightened the animal became and the faster it galloped—always right in front of the bus.

Somehow this was very funny to Valli. She laughed and laughed until there were tears in her eyes.

"Hey, lady, haven't you laughed enough?" called the conductor. "Better save some for tomorrow."

At last the cow moved off the road. And soon the bus came to a railroad crossing. A speck of a train could be seen in the distance, growing bigger and bigger as it drew near. Then it rushed past the crossing gate with a tremendous roar and rattle, shaking the bus. Then the bus went on and passed the train station. From there it traversed a busy, well-laid-out shopping street and, turning, entered a wider thoroughfare. Such big, bright-looking shops! What glittering displays of clothes and other merchandise! Such big crowds!

Struck dumb with wonder, Valli gaped at everything.

Then the bus stopped and everyone got off except Valli.

"Hey, lady," said the conductor, "aren't you ready to get off? This is as far as your thirty paise takes you."

"No," Valli said, "I'm going back on this same bus." She took another thirty paise from her pocket and handed the coins to the conductor.

"Why, is something the matter?"

"No, nothing's the matter. I just felt like having a bus ride, that's all."

"Don't you want to have a look at the sights, now that you're here?"

"All by myself? Oh, I'd be much too afraid."

Greatly amused by the girl's way of speaking, the conductor said: "But you weren't afraid to come in the bus."

"Nothing to be afraid of about that," she answered.

"Well, then, why not go to that stall over there and have something to drink? Nothing to be afraid of about that either."

"Oh, no, I couldn't do that."

"Well, then, let me bring you a cold drink."

"No, I don't have enough money. Just give me my ticket, that's all."

"It'll be my treat and not cost you anything."

"No, no," she said firmly, "please, no."

The conductor shrugged, and they waited until it was time for the bus to begin the return journey. Again there weren't many passengers.

"Won't your mother be looking for you?" the conductor asked when he gave the girl her ticket.

"No, no one will be looking for me," she said.

The bus started, and again there were the same wonderful sights.

Valli wasn't bored in the slightest and greeted everything with the same excitement she'd felt the first time. But suddenly she saw a young cow lying dead by the roadside, just where it had been struck by some fast-moving vehicle.

"Isn't that the same cow that ran in front of the bus on our trip to town?" she asked the conductor.

The conductor nodded, and she was overcome with sadness. What had been a lovable, beautiful creature just a little while ago had now suddenly lost its charm and its life and looked so horrible, so frightening as it lay there, legs spread-eagled, a fixed stare in its lifeless eyes, blood all over. . . .

The bus moved on. The memory of the dead cow haunted her, dampening her enthusiasm. She no longer wanted to look out the window.

She sat thus, glued to her seat, until the bus reached her village at three forty. She stood up and stretched herself.

Then she turned to the conductor and said: "Well, sir, I hope to see you again."

"Okay, madam," he answered her, smiling. "Whenever you feel like a bus ride, come and join us. And don't forget to bring your fare."

She laughed and jumped down from the bus. Then away she went, running straight for home.

When she entered her house she found her mother awake and talking to one of Valli's aunts, the one from South Street. This aunt was a real chatterbox, never closing her mouth once she started talking.

"And where have you been?" said her aunt when Valli came in. She spoke very casually, not expecting a reply. So Valli just smiled, and her mother and aunt went on with their conversation.

"Yes, you're right," her mother said. "So many things in our midst and in the world outside. How can we possibly know about everything? And even when we do know about something, we often can't understand it completely, can we?"

"Oh, yes!" breathed Valli.

"What?" asked her mother. "What's that you say?"

"Oh," said Valli, "I was just agreeing with what you said about things happening without our knowledge."

"Just a chit of a girl, she is," said her aunt, "and yet look how she pokes her nose into our conversation, just as though she were a grown lady."

Valli smiled to herself. She didn't want them to understand her smile. But, then, there wasn't much chance of that, was there?

Translated by K. S. Sundaram
Illustrated by R. K. Laxman

INDONESIA

A Present for Grandfather

by Jusran Safano

There was a young boy named Bakri who lived in a lonely village far in the mountains. It was a lonely village, yes, but also very quiet and peaceful. A swift-flowing stream tumbled down from the mountains and ran through the village. The villagers could hear the rush of its crystal-clear waters as they lay in their beds at night. And then at dawn every morning they could hear another sound that also formed part of their way of life. This was the beating of a big drum in the mosque that stood across the river, and then the echoing voice from the mosque tower summoning them to morning prayers.

It was Bakri's gradfather who sang out this call to the village every morning. He had a strong, powerful voice that seemed to fill the heavens, and he was very diligent about his duties, never missing a single morning. But on this particular morning there was no sound of his voice calling from the mosque.

Bakri thought this was very strange and began worrying about what might have happened. Was Grandfather sick or something? At first Bakri thought he should go to his grandfather's house to see what was the matter instead of going to the mosque to pray. But somehow he didn't want to start the day without going to prayers at dawn. And maybe someone at the mosque might know what had happened to his grandfather.

At the mosque he looked everywhere for the old man, but there was no trace of him, and nobody knew where he was.

Is he sick at home? wondered the boy. When the prayers began, Bakri tried to calm his thoughts and put everything out of his mind so he could pray wholeheartedly, but still he kept worrying.

After prayers, he started for his grandfather's place, but then he stopped to think. Shouldn't he take a present to Grandfather? And wasn't this just the time of year for gathering the muncang, a kind of nut that his grandfather found most delicious? Yes, first he'd go gather nuts for Grandfather.

So away he went hurrying through the mists of early morning, making his way toward Nut Hill, where the finest muncangs grew. It was cold, but he had worn a warm sarong to the mosque, and now he pulled this closely about him as he made his way into the mountains.

As he went along, he thought what a pleasant surprise it would be for Grandfather if he could gather many nuts at Nut Hill. The shells were very, very hard, and after he'd eaten the nuts from inside, then Grandfather could use the shells for carving the lovely finger rings that he could make so well. Why, his grandfather's rings were famous in many villages, and it would be easy to sell them for even fifty rupiahs each. And if he could gather enough nuts for a hundred rings, just think how much money Grandfather could make. Surely he'd be so happy that he wouldn't be sick any more. Let's see, Bakri said to himself, if I multiply fifty rupiahs times one hundred rings, how much money is that? He tried counting it all out on his fingers, but somehow he couldn't get the answer. He was just in the third grade at school, you see. But, anyway, Grandfather was sure to be pleased.

Bakri began whistling a happy tune, but then, suddenly, he stopped. Suppose some of the other boys from the village had beat him to Nut Hill and already gathered all the nuts that had fallen to the ground overnight? And he hurried faster and faster.

He arrived at the foot of Nut Hill just as the sun rose over the horizon, painting the sky a beautiful red. He ran and ran, up and up, frightening the flying foxes that were on their way back to their nests to sleep through the day. Reaching the top of the hill, he stopped for breath. He was delighted to see that he was the first boy there; there wasn't a sign of the others yet.

In the grove of muncang trees, the ground was covered with nuts. There'd been a strong wind the night before, which had knocked down more nuts than usual. Singing merrily to himself, Bakri began gathering the nuts. He used his sarong to make a bag for holding the nuts. It was his best sarong,

but he told himself that he'd wash it carefully when he got home.

Suddenly he heard some voices. Someone was coming up the hill. It must be the other boys from the village, he told himself. And if they find that I came here so early, without even asking them to come with me, and that I've already gathered all the fallen nuts—well, they'll be angry and probably take all the nuts away from me. Why, I'll be lucky if they don't beat me up as well for being so greedy.

His only chance was to hide before the other boys saw him. Running over to one side of the grove, he crawled inside a clump of bushes and hid himself as best he could.

He sat there in the bushes, praying they wouldn't see him. He kept so still that he almost stopped breathing. Soon he saw five boys come over the crest of the hill. All of them were bigger than he.

The boys stopped at the edge of the grove and looked around at the ground, puzzled. "We've come too late," one of them cried in disappointment.

"There's not a single nut left on the ground," another said.

"What bad luck!" said a third. "And after coming all this way."

"Someone got here much earlier," said the tallest boy.

Almost in unison all the boys cried out: "Bakri! That's who must have been here." And one added: "He's always up before dawn anyway to go to the mosque."

Hearing all this from his hiding place in the bushes, Bakri became more and more frightened and prayed all the harder.

"Look!" one of the boys said, pointing to a moist patch of dew under a tree. "Here's his footprints still showing. He must have just left here carrying the nuts with him."

"Quick," said another, "if we hurry, we can catch him and take the nuts away from him."

The oldest boy was staring thoughtfully at the ground.

Finally he said: "No, that wouldn't be fair. After all, didn't he get up early enough to go to the mosque and still get here before us, while we were snugly sleeping in our beds? Well, then, I say he deserves the nuts, and we deserve nothing. If we want nuts, we'd better get up early instead of taking his nuts away from him. And we'd better start going to the mosque at dawn too."

The other boys looked at him sheepishly. They knew, of course, that he was right. If they hadn't been so lazy, they'd have had nuts of their own. Not saying anything to each other, they started back, walking slowly down the hill.

Watching from the bushes, Bakri was deeply moved. He was thankful that his prayers had been answered and the boys hadn't seen him, and he was also filled with pity by the

sad looks on the boys' faces. Suddenly he stood up, gave a loud yell, and went running after the boys.

The boys stopped and turned toward Bakri. They were astonished to see him running toward them.

When he reached them, Bakri said: "I'm sorry I took all the nuts. Here, you take part of them. After all, we're all good friends and should share and share alike."

The five stood there, looking first at Bakri and then at each other. Finally the tallest said: "No, no thank you, Bakri. They're all your nuts because you got up early and came and gathered them."

"Don't be silly," answered Bakri, grabbing the boy's hand. "I really want you to have them. I was going to take them to my grandfather because he didn't give the call to prayers this morning and I thought he might be ill. But he'll be just as happy with only my share."

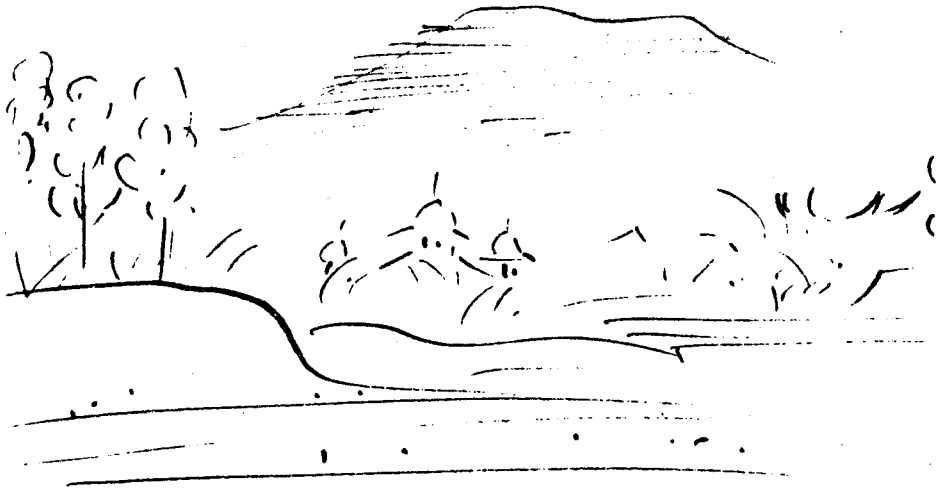
"Yes," said one of the boys, "I saw him talking to a neighbor this morning and heard him say he's caught a bad cold but that he'll be able to go to the mosque again in a few days."

"That's what we'll do, then," said the tallest boy. "Bakri will share his nuts with us, and then we'll all go and give all

of them to Bakri's grandfather. Then he'll get well and strong again in a hurry, and once more we can hear his powerful voice rolling out over the village as it calls us to prayers."

So that's how it was decided. The weather was fine and clear. The boys put their arms around each other's shoulders and walked on down the hill in the sunlight, singing happily, bound for the home of Bakri's grandfather.

Translated by Sugiarta Sriwibawa
Illustrated by Oesman Effendi



IRAN

The Poet and the Sun

by Cyrus Tahbaz

Author's Note. The poem that concludes this story was written by Nima Yooshij, the founder of modern Iranian poetry.

The boy liked the sun. He liked the sun most of all. He could see, hear, and sing in the sun.

When the sun shone, his house was beautiful. Water was blue. Trees were green. Rocks were white. Everything had its own color, everything awakened in the light of the sun.

His friend the rooster crowed, and all people and sheep and birds woke to its crowing. His friend the rabbit left the house for the forest, shaking its long white ears. The boy ran ahead and watched the rabbit happily, stopping to rub its warm back.

The boy liked the birds. He liked their awakening songs. He liked to watch them fly and the color of their wings in the sun.

But most of all he liked the sun.

When the sun went away, the rooster returned to its hutch, and the rabbit folded back its long ears and closed its eyes. The nighthawks came, and other birds were afraid and did not sing any more.

When the sun went away, it became dark. The earth became black.

Everything turned black, jet black.

The boy did not like darkness. His eyes could not see colors in

the dark, and his ears could not hear any song. So he too went to bed.

One night he dreamed that he had grown up and could climb high mountains. So he decided he would climb the nearest mountain and catch the sun in his hands and bring it home so it would never be dark again.

Early next morning the rooster was still crowing when the boy ran out of his house. The rabbit opened its eyes, and the boy was gone.

"I don't know where he was going," the rooster told the rabbit, "but he went that way," and he pointed to the path that led to the mountain.

The rabbit said: "Shouldn't we go after him? He shouldn't be left all alone."

The rabbit ran and ran. The rooster too danced along quickly, trying not to be left behind.

The boy had just reached the foot of the mountain when they caught up with him. Happy to see his friends, the boy stopped, rubbed the rabbit's warm fur and waved to the rooster.

The boy was happy that he was no longer alone. The mountain was high, and the boy moved quickly, afraid the sun might go away before he reached the top.

The rooster became very tired and stopped to rest on a large rock. But the boy did not look back. He was too intent to think of being tired.

The white rabbit knew the way. With his strong legs he could jump onto the highest rocks and climb any height. But he went slowly so the boy could keep up.

The mountain was much like the forest. Sometimes there were big rocks, and sometimes there were tall trees—small bushes here, tall grass there—water in one spot, earth in another.

And everywhere it was green. Light green, dark green, jade green, green the color of new grass, green the color of rain-washed leaves.

There were also other colors—red, orange, yellow, blue, indigo, purple . . . and many colorful flowers. There were short trees and tall trees, thin bushes and thick bushes.

Whatever colors the boy did or did not know—they were all there. And the boy knew too that the sun was there, waiting for him on the mountaintop.

The white rabbit kept running on ahead. The boy was so busy watching the rabbit's leaps and listening to the birds' singing that he did not see they had reached the mountaintop. Suddenly he saw that the path was not going uphill any longer. There were no more bushes, no more trees. Everywhere there was nothing but long green grass, and his friend the white rabbit was playing in the grass.

The boy stopped and looked up at the sky, where he saw the sun. He looked back the way they had come and saw the trees and saw the bushes and rocks, and there beyond the foot of the mountain he saw a thin brown line. The line was a row of houses in his village. His own house looked so small that he could barely see it. All the houses blurred into a brown line.

Turning back, he went through the tall grass to the farther edge of the mountaintop, where he stood and looked down.

There were trees and bushes and rocks on that side of the mountain too. And below him, in the far distance, there was another brown line of houses: there was a village on the other side of the mountain that was just like his own.

But the sun was not on the mountaintop!

The boy sat down in the long grass and thought. He said to himself: "The sun's not here. It never was here. The sun is bigger than any mountain. It's too big to welcome me. It never welcomes anyone."

He lay down in the grass, and the rabbit stood beside him. The boy covered his eyes with his fingers. Then, making a slim, slim crack between his fingers, he looked at the sun high in the sky. The sun seemed very near again, as though it was in his hands. And there in the sun he could see every color he had ever seen before.

He saw the sun was red.

He saw the sun was yellow.

He saw the sun was green, the color of trees, the color of spring leaves, the color of fields of grass.

He saw that every color was in the sun.

Everything he knew was in the sun.

Everything he liked was in the sun.

He spoke to the sun and heard the sun say:

"I am everywhere, everywhere with everything, with everyone and for everyone. Whoever likes me likes everything and likes everybody. Whoever talks to me talks to everything and talks to everybody."

The boy said nothing. The sun said everything.

The sun slipped through the narrow crack between his fingers. It stole over his face and rested on his chest. His chest was warm, warm, and from there the warmth spread through all his body.

The boy took his hands from his eyes and stood up.

The rabbit went running back the way they had come. The rabbit ran quickly and soon reached the rock where the rooster was waiting for them.

The rabbit said: "The sun talked to the boy." Then the rabbit ran on to tell all the other rabbits.

The rooster spread its wings, stretched its head high, and sang out with a loud voice, the loudest voice possible.

The rooster sang out to all the birds: "The sun talked to the boy. The sun talked to the boy."

And the wind carried the rooster's voice everywhere, and the

voice sounded everywhere: "The sun talked to the boy. The sun talked to the boy."
All the trees heard the words, and all the grasses too.
All the trees told the birds.
All the birds told the rocks.
All the rocks told the water.
And the water told the earth.
Then the boy left the mountaintop for home.
The grass opened a way for him.
The trees shook their branches for him, and the birds sang for him.
Now he knew the language of the birds, of the trees, of the rocks, of everything.
He grew up, became a man, became a father. He wrote down the words of the birds, the trees, the rocks, the water. He told these to the people. And the language of the water, rocks, trees, and birds is the language of poetry. It is the language of human beings.
I heard his poems from my father, and I read them to my son. And this is one of his poems, a poem that he brought down from the mountaintop that day so long ago:

Down by the river an old turtle roams about.
Sunny is the day.
The old turtle lies in the warmth of the sun,
sleeps peacefully by the river.
Down by the river I am alone.
In the pain of desire,
I am looking forward to meeting my sun.
Not even for one moment
do my eyes capture it.
My sun has turned its face away from me
in the faraway water.
To me, everything from everywhere

has become clear—
my delays
and my hastes.
My sun is not alone
down there by the river.

Translated by Mostafa Rahbar
Illustrated by Nikzad Nojoumi

JAPAN

The Fox Boy

by Nankichi Niimi (1913–43)

Seven boys were walking along a country road in the moonlight. Some were quite young, having started school only a year or so before, and the others were somewhat older. They were on their way to the night festival of a shrine in the nearby town, which was about a mile away from their village.

The moon was high in the sky, and the boys' shadows on the ground were very short. The boys were amused. How big-headed and short-legged their shadows were! They laughed. Some of them tried to change the shape of their shadows by running a few steps. On a moonlight night children are likely to imagine all sorts of very strange and fantastic things.

The road ascended a little where it had been cut through a small hill. When they reached the summit, the boys could hear the faint notes of a festival flute wafted toward them on the soft breeze of the spring night. At the sound, their steps became faster, and one small boy began to drop behind.

"Hurry, Bunroku, hurry!" they called to him.

The boy called Bunroku was in fact doing his best to catch up with the others. Even in the moonlight you could tell that he was a fair and thin little boy with enormous eyes.

"I'm coming as fast as I can," he called back in a whining voice. "But these clogs! They're Mother's, not mine." And indeed his bony legs did end in a large pair of grown-up clogs, much too big for his small feet.

Reaching the town, they first went to a clog shop on the

main street. Bunroku's mother had asked them to buy him a new pair.

Yoshinori, the oldest of the boys, spoke to the shopkeeper's wife, putting his hand on Bunroku's shoulder: "Listen, Granny, this is the son of Seiroku, the barrelmaker. He needs a pair of clogs that fit right. His mother said she'd pay you later."

The other boys pushed Bunroku to the front so the shopkeeper's wife could see him. The small son of the barrelmaker stood straight and still, blinking his big eyes now and then.

Laughing, the woman took down from a shelf several pairs of clogs that she thought would fit the boy. Just as though he was the boy's father, Yoshinori squatted down and, one after the other, held the clogs up against Bunroku's feet. Bunroku stayed motionless and said nothing. Being the barrelmaker's only child, he was spoiled and used to having things done for him.

One pair of clogs was finally chosen, and just as Bunroku was slipping his feet into the thongs, a very old woman with a bent back came into the shop. Noticing the boy and his new pair of clogs, she murmured, as though half to the boys and half to herself: "Dear, dear! I don't know whose child this is, but if you wear a new pair of clogs for the first time at night, you're sure to be bewitched by a fox."

For a moment everyone was very quiet, and the boys simply stared at the old woman as though struck with fright. Then Yoshinori shouted: "No, that's not so!"

"That's just a superstition!" cried another.

All the boys nodded in agreement, and yet an expression of uneasiness remained on their faces.

"Well, then," said the shopkeeper's wife, "just leave it to me. I'll take away the spell for you." Then she made the motions of striking a match and holding it briefly under the

bottom of each of Bunroku's new clogs. This would have made a slight mark of soot on the clogs, you see, and kept them from being brand new. "Now, the spell's gone. Everything's all right. No fox or badger can bewitch you now."

Then the boys left the shop and went on their way to the shrine precincts, where an outdoor stage had been set up. A number of shrine maidens were performing the dance of celestial beings. The boys watched them closely as each dancer twirled two fans with amazing swiftness. From time to time the boys licked the stick candy in their hands, but without taking their eyes off the dancers. The maidens' faces were thickly coated with white, white powder, and it was some time before the boys recognized one of the dancers as Toneko, the girl who worked in the village bathhouse.

"Look, look," the boys whispered to each other, giggling, "that's just old Toneko."

After a while they had enough of the dancing and drifted off into the darker corners of the shrine precincts to watch the fireworks and firecrackers that were being set off. Then a puppet show began on a lantern-lit float. The boys squeezed their way through the crowd and stood at the very front looking up at the little balcony-like stage on the float.

A puppet was dancing. The boys watched it. The puppet looked neither like an adult nor like a child, and its black eyes shown so brightly that it was hard to believe it was not a real human being. From time to time the puppet blinked its eyes. The boys knew of course that it was the puppeteer standing behind the puppet who was making its eyes blink, but still they felt a little scared each time the eyes moved.

Then, all of a sudden, the puppet opened its mouth, stuck out a long tongue, and before the boys could give screams of surprise, snapped its mouth shut again. In a flashing instant the boys had seen that the inside of the puppet's mouth was all red. Again they knew it was the work of the puppeteer. If it had been daytime, they would have been moved to laughter. But none of them laughed now. In the light of lanterns that made mysterious shadows all about, there was a puppet who blinked its eyes and stuck a red, red tongue out of a red, red mouth. It really looked alive, and they were scared.

They kept remembering Bunroku's new clogs and how the old woman had said: "If you wear new clogs at night, a fox will bewitch you." They also realized they had stayed too long at the festival. The sound of firecrackers had died down, and the crowd was thinning out. And the boys remembered as well the long way home over the hill and through the deserted fields.

They started home, and the moon was still shining high in the sky. But their earlier excitement had become flat, and the moonlight no longer cheered them. They walked along in

silence as though each of them was busy looking into some inner world of his own.

When they reached the top of the hill, one of the boys cupped a hand to his mouth and whispered into the ear of the boy next to him. Then the second boy whispered to a third, and on the whispering went from one boy to the next until everyone except Bunroku had heard the secret.

This is what they were whispering: "The shopkeeper's wife didn't take away the spell after all: she only pretended to strike a match."

The boys walked along, scarcely daring to breathe and not saying a word. They were all thinking the same thing. What exactly does it mean to be bewitched by a fox? Would the fox get inside of Bunroku? Or would Bunroku's mind turn into the fox's mind while his outside appearance remained the same? In that case, maybe the fox has already taken possession of Bunroku. But how can we tell if Bunroku doesn't say word? . . .

The road was descending now. It went through a field planted with some low grass. The boys were walking faster, all thinking about Bunroku and the fox.

The road went past a small pond with several plum trees around it. Just as they passed the pond, one of them made a faint coughing sound. In the silence they heard it very clearly. They looked suspiciously at each other. Everything was quiet, and they gradually realized that the sound had come from Bunroku.

Bunroku had coughed! Did that have some deep meaning? The more they thought about it, the more they came to believe it hadn't been a cough at all. Surely it had sounded more like a fox's yelp.

"Ahem!" There, Bunroku had done it again.

And this time there was no doubt about it in the boy's minds: there was surely a fox among them. Frightened, they hurried on faster.

Bunroku's house was in a grove of tangerine trees, in a little valley away from all the other houses. To get to it, you took a narrow path that branched off the main road just beside the water wheel. Usually the boys would go out of their way to accompany Bunroku to his gate, because they knew how helpless and spoiled he was. His mother often gave the boys tangerines and sweets, asking them to look after her little son. Even tonight, for example, they had taken the trouble to go to Bunroku's house and get him before starting for the festival.

Now the group had reached the water wheel. They could see how the path to Bunroku's house descended into some tall grass and disappeared. None of them dared move. It seemed as though they had quite forgotten that they usually took Bun-

roku home. But they hadn't forgotten at all: they were afraid. They were afraid of little Bunroku.

At last Bunroku started down the path by himself. But he kept looking back, hoping that Yoshinori at least would come with him. But even Yoshinori made no move.

Alone, Bunroku followed the path down into the moonlit valley. He could hear the muffled croaking of frogs from somewhere nearby. Now that he was almost home, he no longer minded that the older boys had not come with him. But they always had before. This was the first time they hadn't. Now, Bunroku was far from being an alert child, but at least he was sensitive enough to understand what had happened. He knew what the other boys had been whispering about and how they had felt when he coughed.

Bunroku recalled how kind and helpful everyone had been on the way to the festival. But after he'd put on his new clogs, everyone had kept his distance from him. "They think a fox

has bewitched me," he thought, "and that's why they don't like me anymore." His feelings were hurt. Even Yoshinori, who was much older and always very kind to Bunroku, had acted strange tonight. Usually this protector of his was quick to notice when Bunroku was cold and would give him his own jacket to keep him warm. But tonight Yoshinori hadn't offered his jacket, not even when Bunroku had coughed a second time.

He had now reached the back gate to his house, just where the hedge ended. As he opened the little wooden wicket, he caught sight of his shadow on the ground. Then a suspicion crossed his mind: "Maybe a fox *has* bewitched me. If that's so, what will Mother and Father do with me?"

His father had gone to a meeting of barrelmakers and would be late coming home. So Bunroku and his mother decided to go to bed without waiting for him. Though Bunroku had already started to school, he still slept with his mother. Indeed he was an only child, spoiled and helpless.

After they were in bed, his mother said: "Well, tell me all about the festival." She always wanted to know everything that Bunroku did. When he went to school, she wanted to know exactly what he had done every minute. When he went to town, she wanted to know everything that had happened. And when he went to a movie, she wanted to know the full story of what he had seen.

Bunroku was not good at talking. He would tell what had happened bit by bit, joggingly. But his mother always listened intently and seemed very pleased by his accounts.

"One of the celestial maidens—she was just old Toneko of the bathhouse," Bunroku said.

"Is that so?" His mother laughed heartily. "And who were the others—could you tell?"

Bunroku opened his big eyes wide as though trying to remember. But his next remark had nothing to do with the

festival. "Mother, is it true that a fox will bewitch you if you wear new clogs for the first time at night?"

His mother, taken by surprise, looked puzzled for a moment. At first she couldn't understand what Bunroku was talking about. But she soon guessed what must have happened to her little boy.

"Who said so?" she asked.

Bunroku only repeated his question earnestly once more. "Is it really true?"

"No, of course not. It was only in days long, long ago that people believed such things."

"Then it's a lie."

"Yes, it's a lie."

"Are you sure?"

"Absolutely."

For a few moments Bunroku was silent. He rolled his big eyes back and forth a time or two. Finally he asked: "But if it *did* happen, what would you do?"

"If what happened?" asked his mother.

"I mean, if a fox *did* bewitch me and I turned into a fox myself, what would you do?"

His mother gave a peal of laughter.

"Answer me! Answer me, Mother!" Half-embarrassed, he reached out and shook his mother.

"Well, well," said his mother, looking thoughtful. "If you became a fox, we couldn't keep you in the house of course."

Bunroku looked desolate as he listened to his mother's words. "Then where would I go?" he asked.

"To Mount Karasune maybe," answered his mother. "They say foxes still live there."

"But what would you and Father do then?"

His mother put a very serious look on her face, the way grown-ups often do when they're teasing small children. "We'd talk the matter over, and probably we'd say: 'Now

that our beloved Bunroku has become a fox, we have no more joy in this world; so let's quit being human beings and become foxes too.' "

"You and Father would become foxes too?"

"Yes, your father and I will buy new clogs and wear them tomorrow night, and that way we'll be turned into foxes. Then all three of us can go together to Mount Karasune."

Bunroku's eyes became bigger and bigger. "Is that in the west, where the tall mountains are?"

"Yes, it's in Shimane Prefecture, southwest of Narawa."

"Is it deep in the mountains?"

"Yes, and covered with pine trees."

"Wouldn't there be hunters?"

"You mean, hunters with guns? Of course there would, because nobody lives there and there're many animals."

"If the hunters shoot at us, what'll we do then?"

"We'll hide in a deep cave and huddle in a corner. Then the hunters won't see us."

"But when the snows come, there won't be enough food, and we'll have to go out for food, and then the hunters' dogs will find us."

"Then we'll run together for our dear lives."

"You and Father will be all right, because you're grown and can run fast, but I'm only a child fox and will be left behind."

"We'll take you by both paws and pull you along."

"With the dogs right behind us?"

His mother fell silent, and when she next spoke, the teasing tone was gone from her voice: "Well, then I'll limp along slowly behind you."

"Why?" the boy asked.

"Because that way it'll be me the dog catches in his teeth. He'll hold me there until the hunters come and tie me up fast. That'll give you and Father time to run away to safety."

Bunroku was astounded. He stared at his mother round-eyed. "No, Mother, no!" he shouted, "then we'd be without you."

"But there's no other way, dear," his mother said quietly. "Mother will go limping along behind, slower and slower."

"You won't! You won't! You won't!" Bunroku shouted, throwing himself about until he kicked his pillow off the bed. Then he clung to his mother for a moment, tears falling from his big eyes.

The mother felt tears in her eyes too and furtively wiped them away with the sleeve of her nightdress. Reaching out for the little pillow, gently she slipped it under Bunroku's head.

Translated by Kyoko Matsuoka
Illustrated by Teikichi Miyoshi

KOREA

Yuni and the Ox

by O Yong-su

Most people like oxen, but not Yuni. Instead, he much preferred horses. He couldn't bring himself to like oxen. An ox was slow, whereas a horse could be ridden, could be easily led, and could also pull a cart. It was hard to pet an ox because of its horns, and then, too, an ox was always chewing something, acting just like a glutton.

However, in addition to these reasons, something happened one day that made Yuni dislike oxen even more. The small village where he lived had about ten houses, and in front of it there was an open space that all the villagers used for threshing rice. All around were sloping paths and rice paddies, and in the distance there towered a range of mountains. It was only natural that the village children regarded the threshing space as their playground.

It was early spring, the time for plowing the paddy fields. Beside the threshing ground, tied to a weeping-willow tree, there was an ox that was all brown except for black eyes, a black stomach, and black markings on its hoofs. The tips of the willow branches were turning green.

After lunch and a good long nap, Yuni took his ball, which was old and ragged, and went to play on the threshing ground.

The immense, fierce-looking ox took him by surprise. He gave a loud cry, and his eyes grew as big as saucers. For a long time he stood still and stared at the ox, watching its every movement. Every now and then the ox switched its tail to chase away the flies. Even though the animal seemed to be

gazing at some blooming peach trees across a valley, it was probably thinking of nothing in particular as it chewed its cud.

As Yuni's fears gradually subsided he became very curious. Step by step he went nearer the ox. All of a sudden the ox turned its head in Yuni's direction. The boy stopped dead in his tracks and put his ball behind his back, feeling sure that the ox was intending to snatch it away from him. Instead, the ox licked its flank several times with its tongue, switched its tail, lowered its eyes, and once again began chewing its cud.

Still holding the ball tightly behind his back, Yuni began to wonder: "Why don't horses have horns? If an ox and a horse got into a fight, I wonder which would win?" No matter how he thought about it, he was sure that the ox

fight with a tiger? And that time when he had fallen down and cut his elbow, and even though blood was running down arm, he had been able to hold back the tears. But this time was different. He was badly shaking with fright.

Though his eyes filled with tears, he didn't cry. Gradually his fright changed to anger. He stared at the ox with daggers in his eyes, just as though he were about to blindly attack the beast. Then he cried out in a sobbing voice: "Stupid! So you won't give my ball back?"

The ox only kept on chewing.

"It's my ball, stupid!" His voice broken by sobs, Yuni clenched his fists in a last attempt to frighten the ox. But, however hard he might try, he knew he was no match for those horns. If only the ox didn't have horns, he might even try to box him.

As though very annoyed, the ox noisily licked its nostrils with its tongue and then again closed its eyes. The red welt on Yuni's left cheek looked like an earthworm. Rubbing it with his hand, he cried out: "I'll go get my father, and then you'll see! He'll take care of you all right!"

Yuni glared once more at the ox, his lips curled. Then he turned and ran home.

His parents were gone when he reached home. The housemaid was making a fire under a pot of barley in the kitchen. Yuni kept after her until she came out with him to look for his ball.

By the time they reached the threshing ground, however, the ox was far away with a yoke around its neck, plowing a water-filled paddy field with its owner walking behind, urging it on. The threshing ground was bare, the ball nowhere in sight.

Translated by Genell Y. Poitras
Illustrated by Kim Young-ju

MALAYSIA

The Neighbors

by Ismail Ahmad

Editors' Note. The people of Malaysia follow several different religions. When they live closely together, as in the new urban developments that are being built, their religious differences sometimes cause misunderstandings. But, as in the present story, goodwill and friendship can overcome many difficulties.

When Zalela and her family moved into the Taman Sentosa housing development, she soon became friends with Mei Ling, who lived next door. The two girls, who were in the same class, would walk to and from school together every day, and they spent all their free time together. Their friendship blossomed until one evening when Mei Ling's mother brought home a dog.

"Look, dear, I've brought you a puppy. It's a birthday present from your father and me."

"For me?" exclaimed the girl in delight. Hugging the puppy to her, she spoke to it: "Oh, you're so beautiful! I think I'll call you Johan. Yes, Johan."

But, next door, Zalela's mother became uneasy when she learned about the puppy. According to the religion of Zalela's family, dogs were unclean and should not be kept as house pets. She tried to talk to her husband about it, but he seemed unconcerned. "Well, as long as the puppy doesn't come into our house, I guess it'll be all right," he said.

"But don't you hear it whining and barking day and night?" she grumbled.

"Oh, it's probably just not used to its new home and misses its mother. That's why it barks."

But this did not make her feel any easier. And she was afraid Zalela would start playing with the puppy. Finally she decided that she must forbid Zalela to go to Mei Ling's house.

"But why can't I go there?" Zalela asked.

"Because of the puppy."

"But what's wrong with that? I don't play with it."

"I know, dear. But you know our religion forbids us even to touch a dog."

Depressed, Zalela could not think of any reply. But secretly she still continued to go to Mei Ling's after that.

One evening Zalela came rushing home and hurried to the back of the house. Suspicious, her mother followed her out, where she found the girl washing her knee, scrubbing it vigorously.

"What's wrong, Zalela?" she asked, acting surprised.

"Oh, Johan licked my knee, Mother."

Hearing that, the woman became furious. "Didn't I tell you to stay away from Mei Ling's! Why did you disobey me?"

"I'm sorry. Please don't be angry. See, I've already washed my knee," she said, standing up.

"I can see that. But you're not to go to Mei Ling's anymore. That's final."

"But, Mother, she's my best friend."

Just then Mei Ling appeared. "Oh, please don't be upset," she appealed. "Johan was only trying to play with Zalela."

But Zalela's mother became even angrier. "Indeed, playing with that dog! Both of you know its against our religion. And if a dog does touch you, you have to wash that part of your body once with water mixed with clay and six times with clean water."

"But Johan is clean," Mei Ling protested. "I wash him

every day. He's not in the least bit dirty. Just look at him," she said, pointing at Johan, who had come up behind her.

"I know his body is clean, Mei Ling. But for us he's still an unclean animal. And that's that."

Mei Ling could not think of anyway to defend Johan. And she could not really understand what Zalela's mother was trying to say. All she knew was that she did not like Johan's being accused of being unclean.

Suddenly the dog began running around the yard, wagging his tail and barking playfully. "Oh, no! Get that dog out of here. Don't let him in!" shouted Zalela's mother in disgust.

Mei Ling could not believe what she was hearing. It frightened her. Saying nothing, she ran out of the yard with Johan at her heels. Once back home, she told her mother what had happened.

"Mei Ling, you know that people of their religion aren't allowed to play with dogs," soothed her mother.

"But why did she accuse my Johan of being unclean? I keep him very clean," argued Mei Ling, in tears. Her mother did not say anything.

Despite her mother's warning, Zalela still continued to go to Mei Ling's. The girls did not seem in the least bothered by the recent incident, for their friendship was too important to them. Zalela also realized that Mei Ling loved Johan very much.

Johan continued to be a neighborhood nuisance. He would howl all night and spend his time chasing cats, always causing much commotion.

One Sunday afternoon Mei Ling went to Zalela's to play. As the two girls sat there, Johan came and stood by the front gate. Zalela's cat, Koreng, came out of the house and joined the girls. Suddenly Johan charged into the yard, heading straight for the cat. Jumping with fright, Koreng ran into the house, Johan following close behind. Inside, Koreng jumped

up on the television set. But as he did so he brushed against a vase, which fell on the floor, shattering.

Hearing the noise, Zalela's mother came rushing into the room. "Oh, my, what's happened to my beautiful vase?" she shouted in disbelief.

Johan stood in the hall, growling. Seeing him, the woman picked up a broom and started beating him with it. Yelping in pain, the dog ran out of the house.

Mei Ling stood watching, helpless and almost in tears. Saying nothing, she ran out of the yard after Johan. Zalela was too stunned to do anything. She knew her mother was very angry and would not allow her to see Mei Ling at all anymore. Just because of Johan.

That night, when Mei Ling's father returned home from

work, he found his daughter in tears. Between sobs, she told him what had happened.

"Well, of course she'd be angry if Johan chased the cat into her house and then broke her vase," he said.

"What'll we do now?" Mei Ling's mother asked.

"I don't know. I guess she'll just have to stay away from Zalela for a while," he replied reluctantly.

Mei Ling was stunned. Her father's words took her by complete surprise. She rushed off to her room, confused and sad about everything that had happened.

That night Zalela could not sleep. She kept on thinking that because of Johan her friendship with Mei Ling was ruined. Maybe I ought to ask her to get rid of the dog, she thought. But, no, she knew she could not ask her friend to do that, for Mei Ling loved the dog too much. Zalela might not want to lose Mei Ling, but she knew her friend would not want to lose Johan either.

Meanwhile, over the next few weeks Johan's barking continued, but now it sounded increasingly strange. First he would whine softly, then he would growl and bark, and finally he would howl. And his howling would take on an eerie, frightening tone. Mei Ling became worried that Johan was ill, but her father assured her that he was not.

Night after night Johan's strange barking and howling continued. It made the neighbors uneasy, for they felt it was a bad omen. Rumors began to spread that it meant either the dog or its owner was going to meet with some serious misfortune. Hearing this, Mei Ling became even sadder.

During this time Mei Ling and Zalela did not meet. Although they saw each other at school, they never talked, and they went home separately. But finally one day Zalela gathered up enough courage to speak to her friend. Walking up to Mei Ling, she asked: "Don't you want to be friends with me anymore?"

"Of course I do. But you know that we're not allowed to meet."

"And all because of Johan."

"I know, but there's nothing we can do."

"Well . . ."

"Well, what?"

"You won't be mad if I say something?"

"Of course not. We're friends."

"Well, then, Mei Ling, I think you should keep him tied up."

"Tied up?"

"Yes, keep him on a rope in your yard. Then we could see each other again."

"But I don't think he'll like that. He's always been free to run around as he pleases. If I tie him up, he'll just bark more."

"Does that matter, as long as we can see each other?"

"But it won't work. It'll just make the neighbors angrier. They'd probably kill him."

"Don't be silly. They can't kill him. And I'm sure he'll get used to being tied up after a while. As it is, he barks all the time even though he's free."

Mei Ling thought for a moment. Finally she replied: "All right, I'll try tying him up tonight and see what happens."

Both girls smiled and started off toward home, hand in hand.

That night Mei Ling tied Johan up under the porch. But the dog barked endlessly. Saddened by this, the girl kept on going out of the house to see him, patting and stroking his head and back. "Don't cry, darling. I only did this for your own good. This way no one will ever beat you with a broom again. And now Zalela and I can still be friends." But Johan just whined and licked her face.

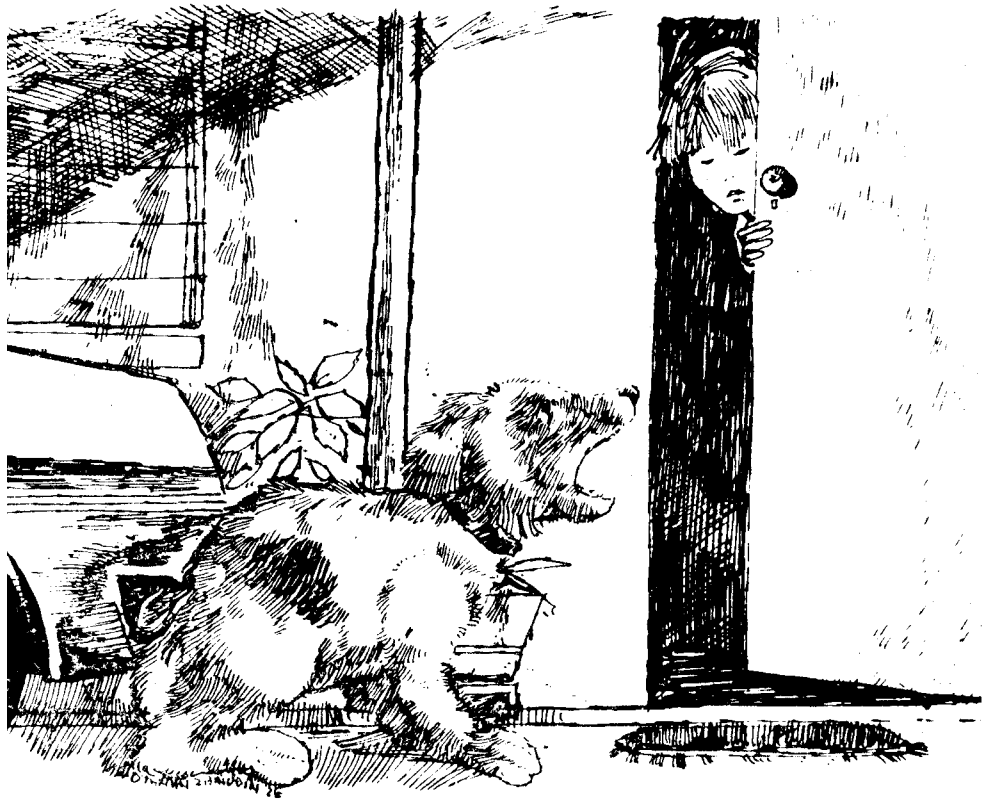
No sooner would she quiet him down than his barking

would start again, growing louder and louder. And then Mei Ling would rush out to him once more. Her parents watched in silence, afraid to say anything.

It was growing late. Mei Ling had already been out to comfort the dog five times. Tired and upset, she finally decided to set him free. "All right, I'll untie you now. But promise you'll be quiet and not go anywhere." The dog whined as if he understood what she was saying. Then he gave a low growl and looked toward the road.

"Hey, what's the matter? Be quiet. I'll untie you, but don't roam around," she said, setting him free. But as she went back into the house he sat there, staring at the road.

Except for some frogs croaking in the distance, the night was completely still. Suddenly it began to rain. Slowly, Mei Ling drifted off into an uneasy sleep. She dreamed that she was with Zalela and Johan, the three of them walking end-



lessly. They came to a ravine. She looked over the edge, but it was dark and deep, and she could not see anything. Then, suddenly, Johan slipped and fell into the gaping blackness.

Mei Ling woke up screaming. She jumped out of bed and rushed into the yard. It was dawn. Johan was nowhere to be seen. She screamed again, and her parents came running out.

The three of them looked around the yard, but there was not a trace of the dog. Mei Ling searched the neighborhood, calling out loudly, "Johan, Johan," but there was no sign of him. Gloomily she returned home and sat under the porch where Johan used to sleep. Quietly she murmured to herself: "This would never have happened if I hadn't tied him up. He hated it. That's what made him run away."

Her mother said consolingly: "Don't be sad dear. We'll get you another dog soon."

"But it won't be as good as Johan. I don't want another dog. I'm going out and look for Johan. I just know he isn't dead."

Word of what had happened quickly spread through the neighborhood. When Zalela heard, she immediately went over to her friend's house. As soon as Mei Ling saw her, she threw her arms around Zalela and started sobbing.

"Please don't cry, Mei Ling," said Zalela, but she too felt sad.

"Oh, I know he's dead!"

"No he isn't. He's still alive. We'll find him."

"I know he's dead. Last night I dreamed that he fell into a deep ravine and disappeared."

"Don't be silly. Let's go look for him now. He might be down by the stream where we used to fish."

So the two girls set off down the road. The morning was cool, and dewdrops glittered on the grass. In the east, the sun was slowly rising. Since it was Sunday, there was little traffic on the road.

As they approached the stream by the side of the road, they saw something floating in it. Mei Ling's heart was pounding. Leaving Zalela, she ran ahead. When she reached the edge of the stream, she saw that it was Johan's body. He was covered with bruises and wounds It seemed that he had been hit by a passing car and thrown into the pond. Mei Ling almost fainted.

Later that morning Zalela helped her friend bury Johan at the back of Mei Ling's house. The girls planted a small bush near his head. Then Mei Ling knelt beside the grave and, in a trembling voice, murmured: "Rest peacefully, my love. This plant will always remind me of you. I'll water and care for it until it's big and healthy. Sleep well. I'll always look after your grave."

Zalela, who was kneeling beside her, was touched by her friend's words. Both girls were crying. Quietly they stood up and, hand in hand, turned and walked away.

As they came around to the front of Mei Ling's house, they saw Zalela's mother enter the gate, carrying a small basket. At first Zalela was afraid that her mother would be angry at finding her at Mei Ling's. But the woman just walked up to the two girls and placed her hand on Mei Ling's shoulder, softly saying: "I'm sorry that your pet was killed. I know you loved him very much. But please understand why I couldn't allow Zalela to come here when you had your dog. I hope that you two will be able to continue your friendship now. And I although I know that nothing will ever replace your dog, I've brought you this to keep you company at home."

As she finished, Zalela's mother handed Mei Ling the basket. Looking inside, the girl saw a tiny white kitten, its eyes barely open. "Oh, what a beautiful kitty," cried Mei Ling. Picking up the little ball of white fur and rubbing it against her cheek, she said: "I know Johan would never be

jealous of you. I'm sure he'd be happy that I've found a new friend. You can help me take care of his little plant." Her eyes brimming with tears, she turned to Zalela's mother. "Oh, thank you, thank you. I'll love my kitty as much as I loved Johan. And Zalela and I shall be the best of friends always and always."

Translated by Izzah Aziz
Illustrated by Othman bin Haji Zainudin

NEPAL

The Magic Flute

by Madhav Ghimire

The sun was setting as Sukumar walked up the dirt path and into the small village. He was a boy of about eleven or so. In the distance lay the majestic panorama of the Himalayas, the uppermost peaks still bathed in warm tones of red and gold. Sukumar was alone and knew no one in the village, but he hoped to find someone who would put him up for the night. In the distance a girl was calling her mother, and he was reminded of his own mother, who was dead. Filled with memories of her, he took out his flute and raised it to his

lips. He felt that by playing a tune he was calling his mother, just as the girl in the distance was calling hers.

As he stood there playing, a middle-aged woman carrying a heavy load of grass on her back came up the path behind him. She was the wife of the village headman. She stopped and listened silently to the boy's tune. Sensing her presence, Sukumar looked at her. When their eyes met, it seemed to both of them that they had always known each other.

The woman asked: "My son, where are you going?"

"I'm a stranger here, mother, looking for a place to spend the night," he replied.

Did they address each other as mother and son merely out of kindness, or was there some deeper meaning?

The woman seemed surprised. Although the boy did not know anyone in the village and did not seem to have a definite destination, he stood there cheerfully playing his flute just as if he was any other carefree child.

"Come with me, my son," she said. "That's your sister calling me. When I heard your flute, I felt in my heart that you too were calling me with your tune. Come along, we must go home."

Tucking away his flute, the boy followed the woman to her house.

At the age of five Sukumar had lost his own mother. All he could remember of her was a pair of shining eyes and the string of blue beads she always wore around her neck. He believed that she still lived within his heart.

The flute he carried had been a gift from his father. After the death of his mother, his father would play his own flute every evening before going to bed, and it was to the sound of these melodies that the small boy would fall asleep. One night as his father sat playing, Sukumar asked him: "Where is Mama? Why can't we see her anymore?"

Putting down the flute, the man's eyes became sad. "Your

mother now lives in the house of the gods. Although she is far beyond the sky, she is with us in our hearts."

Sukumar then asked: "Are you ever able to meet her in your heart?"

Gazing down at the boy, he answered: "Yes, my son, when I play the flute."

"Oh, how I want to see her! Please make me a flute too, so that I'll know she's with me when I play it."

Soon afterward, Sukumar's father carefully fashioned a flute for the boy and taught him how to play it. His father also taught him to appreciate the beauty of the moonlight and the song made by the falling rain. Often his father would say: "Be happy and play your flute cheerfully, for this in turn will make your mother happy when she hears your tunes."

Sukumar spent all his time practicing on his flute. One day when he was nine, his father said: "My son, now you're even

better than your father at playing the flute. But I want to tell you something I've never told you before. In their hearts, all persons can feel the melody of the flute, no matter what kind of people they are. When you play your flute, you must always play it with much love in your own heart. Then everyone will recognize your love through the melody. And you'll be able to find your own true mother."

A few days after this, Sukumar's father died. Sad and alone, the boy put down his flute and did not touch it again for six months. He spent most of his time crying softly to himself. Because he was an orphan, he was eventually taken to live with his uncle. There, once again, he began to play his flute, not to get the attention of those around him but rather to show them his love and, in return, to receive theirs.

But young Sukumar was restless. One day he took his flute

and left his uncle's house, setting out on a journey that had no destination. As he walked, he would play, and the people he met along the road would surround him, enjoying his tunes and sometimes even dancing to the music. But still he was alone, for no one would love him as his dear parents had. Most people were more interested in themselves and their own problems and had no time for young Sukumar after he finished his tunes. No one had time for him, that is, until the evening he met the village headman's wife, who called him son. In her he felt he had found his own true mother once again.

As the two of them entered the yard, he saw a young girl walking in the garden. This was the woman's small daughter, Sayapatri, who earlier had been calling her mother. The woman nodded toward Sukumar and said: "Daughter, I've brought home a nice boy to stay with us—no, I mean I've brought home your brother."

The two children stood there shyly, not saying a word. But both were happy. Sayapatri, who had no brothers, now had Sukumar, and he in turn now had a sister. Then they entered the house, and as Sukumar sat watching the woman prepare the evening meal by the warm glow of the lamplight, he felt a happiness that had long been missing from his life.

Soon the village headman came home. Saying nothing, he gave Sukumar a curious glance that made the boy feel sad and uncomfortable. The woman said to her husband: "I met this boy on the road today. He plays the flute very well."

During supper the man said nothing to the boy. After the plates had been cleared away, Sukumar took out his flute and began to play softly. The family sat there silently, enraptured by the boy's music. The parents felt that his melody was touching something very familiar in their hearts. Sayapatri sensed that her new brother was trying to talk to the family

through his tunes. When hs finished and got up to go to bed, the woman gently took his face in her hands and kissed him on the cheek saying: "Good night, my son."

The next morning Sukumar arose early and prepared to leave. But the woman stopped him, saying: "We're mother and son. I won't let you leave your home." And so Sukumar stayed with the family.

Sayapatri loved Sukumar dearly, but found that there were many things about him that she could not understand. Mostly she wondered why he often looked so serious. During the day she would take him around the village, introducing him to her friends.

One day the two children walked down to a nearby stream. Sukumar sat silently on a boulder, staring at the water. Unable to control her curiosity, Sayapatri asked: "What are you thinking about, my brother?"

"Dear sister, you have your own mother, and she loves you because you're her daughter. But my mother's gone. And the only way I can ever meet her is by playing my flute."

Sayapatri was shocked by his answer. "But, my brother, isn't my mother also your mother? Am I not your sister?" she asked.

Hesitating, he replied: "Yes, you're my sister, and she's my mother, but . . ."

"But, what, my brother?"

"You have the love of your father, but I've lost mine."

"But isn't my father also yours?"

"No, for I haven't yet won his heart."

"Well, then, I'll tell him tonight that he must love you more."

"No, no, my sister, don't do that. It'll be all right. I'll win his heart by playing my flute."

That evening after the two children had gone to sleep, the father started talking quietly to his wife. "Orphans aren't very

dependable. They never stay in one place for long. Sukumar will be like that, too. One day he'll up and leave. In the meantime he'll probably just sit around here loafing and living off our kindness. And he'll end up being a bad influence on our Sayapatri."

The woman was shocked by her husband's words. "But, my dear, of course he's an orphan, which is why we must become his parents. We'll be his mother and father. Oh, sometimes I can't believe the heartless things you say."

With that the conversation ended and the two fell asleep.

Life in the household continued on as it had been. Spring came to the village, and the rhododendron trees burst into bloom. The young women of the village gathered to do the dance of Ghatu, as was the custom in this season.

One spring evening Sukumar sat by the window, gazing out at the full moon. The drifting clouds and the silver moonlight seemed to be asking him to play a very special tune for them. Picking up his flute, he was insprired to create just such a melody. But when he finished he was filled with sadness. Despite all his efforts, he was still unable to win the love of Sayapatri's father. It seemed an impossible task. Better, he thought, that I leave now rather than continue on like this.

In the predawn hours of the next morning he quietly left the house while the rest of the family lay sleeping. Outside he stopped and turned, silently bidding farewell to Sayapatri and her mother. Then he started on his way.

By dawn he had reached the pine-covered hills beyond the village. For a moment he imagined he heard Sayapatri calling his name. He wished, then, that he had waited to say goodbye to her. But there was no going back; so once again he started on his way. All day he climbed over hills and down through valleys, until at sunset he found himself at the summit of a mountain. A shrine to a goddess stood there, and he decided that he would take shelter in it for the night. Once

inside, he felt very lonely and sad. There was a tune floating in his head, but it was a very sad one. He felt that by leaving Sayapatri and her mother he had once again lost his family. He wanted to create a melody for Sayapatri to tell her how much he loved her, but all that emerged from his heart was a cry of despair. He sat there, weeping softly to himself.

When he awoke, the morning sunlight was streaming through the chinks in the windows of the shrine. Looking up, he saw the statue of the goddess, its hands spread to welcome him. The goddess's head was surrounded by a halo, and a garland of flowers hung from her neck. He felt the presence of Sayapatri and her mother in the statue. It seemed as if they were trying to embrace him through the statue's hands. Suddenly he was filled with doubt. Should he continue on his journey or should he return to Sayapatri and the family? He slowly walked out of the shrine and sat down under a large tree. All day long he sat there, trying to decide what to do.

That night he again slept in the shrine, dreaming of Sayapatri. In his dream she was standing in front of him, beckoning him to follow her. He started to speak, but she raised her finger to her lips, indicating that he should be quiet. When he awoke from his sleep, he knew that his decision had been made. He would return home.

It had been a year since he had first come to the village and gone home with the headman's wife. His first glimpse of Sayapatri had been as she stood in front of the mound of the tulsi plant. At that time there had been a lamp burning on the mound. Tonight, when he returned, there was once again a lamp burning on the mound. But in the yard many of the villagers were milling around and all wore gloomy looks on their faces.

Silently Sukumar entered the house. Inside, Sayapatri lay on her mother's lap. Looking up and seeing him, the woman

cried out: "My son, look what's happened to your dear sister! People say she'll recover, but, oh, I don't know."

Sukumar approached them slowly, tears streaming down his face. Stretching out his hand, he softly stroked his sister's cheek.

"On the night you left, she suddenly came down with a very high fever. Since yesterday she's been like this—in a coma. I think her spirit's left her body and gone off in search of you. Now you've returned. Please, my son, do something to revive her."

Sukumar sat there motionless, his hand on Sayapatri's cheek. Then he brought out his flute and began to play it very quietly. As the tune floated across the room, Sayapatri's eyelids began to flutter. Her father, who had come into the room, brought a cup of water and placed it to the girl's lips. Slowly her eyes opened. Seeing Sukumar, she murmured: "My brother, oh my brother! You've returned."

Putting down his flute, Sukumar replied: "Yes, my dear sister, I'm here. It's me, your brother."

Suddenly the father moved next to Sukumar and, with tears in his eyes, hugged the boy to his chest. "Truly you're my own dear son. Never, never will I let you go again."

The mother sat there, shedding tears of joy. Sayapatri and Sukumar looked at each other and smiled.

This was, indeed, just as one of the villagers said, like the story of Ghatu, one of Nepal's famous sacred dances.

Translated by Abhi Subedi
Illustrated by Tek Bir Mukhiya

PAKISTAN

Tunu and the Donkey

by Anwar Enayetullah

Editors' Note. It has been necessary to shorten this story considerably, omitting a final episode and condensing other portions.

Tunu and her brother, Safdar, were young, lively children. They lived in a beautiful hill town, where their father was a high official of the Department of Agriculture; everyone called him "doctor sahib" out of respect for his position. Their devoted mother was full of patience—and needed every bit of it, because her children often got into mischief, especially Tunu. The children had two favorite pets, a German shepherd named Tiger that followed Tunu everywhere she went and a small deer that lived in the barn.

Tunu was something of a tomboy and loved playing outdoors. She particularly liked the pool in the garden, where her father had taught the two children how to swim. Her mother, however, wished she would be more docile and ladylike. "Who ever heard of girls running around so much?" she would say. "Why, you'd think she was actually a boy."

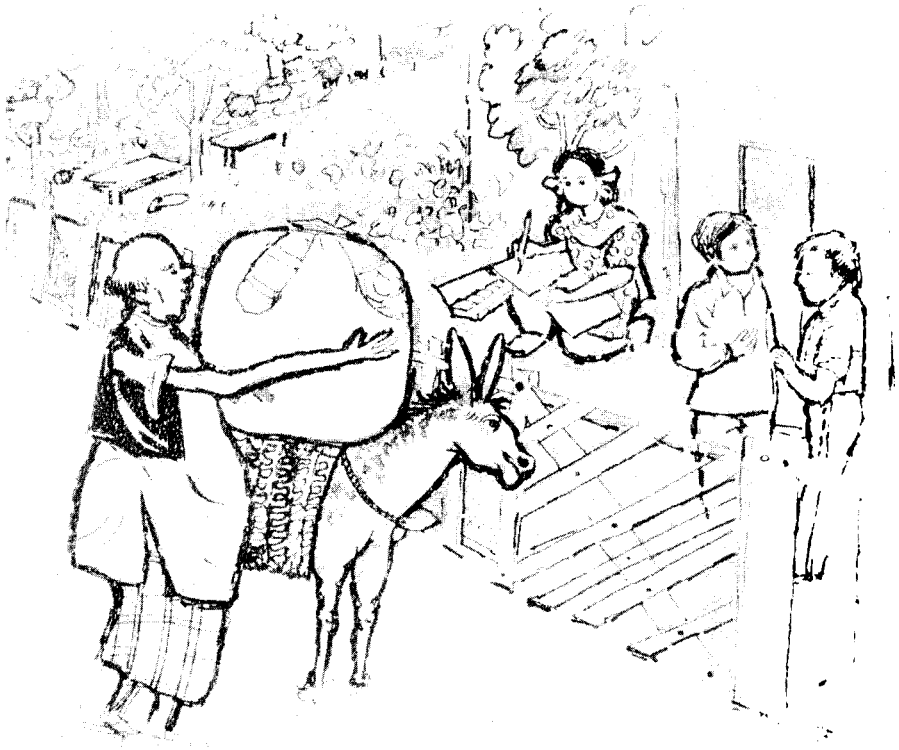
"Yes," her father would answer, smiling tolerantly. "We have a rather topsy-turvy family. Maybe she should have been a boy, and then Safdar would have had to be a girl."

"It's no wonder," the mother would say, "the way you spoil her."

One Sunday their father left the house early in the morning to go hunting. It was the season for wild ducks, and the nearby lake was full of them. The weather was beautiful, and their cousin, a boy of Safdar's age, was visiting them. So after breakfast the children decided to play outside in the garden. They spread a rug under one of the big shade trees and brought out some coloring books and a Meccano set. Tunu started coloring the picture of a bird, but you could tell she was really more interested in the toy building set; she kept watching what the boys were building and making suggestions for improvements.

They'd been playing only a short time when they heard a donkey bray loudly just outside the gate. This announced the arrival of the laundryman who came each Sunday morning with the family's clean laundry piled high on the back of his donkey. The children jumped up and raced to open the gate for him. Fat-bellied and bald, with large, clumsy hands, the laundryman was a source of much amusement for the children. They loved to tease and make fun of him.

As the donkey followed his master through the gate, Safdar



turned to his sister: "Go tell mother the laundryman is here."

"Go tell her youself," answered Tunu. "Can't you see I'm busy?" And to prove it she went back to the bird in her coloring book.

"Oh, all right," said her brother.

Safdar and his cousin went into the house, but they found the mother had gone to a neighbor's. So they went to look for her, leaving Tunu alone in the garden.

Presently, bored with coloring, Tunu let the book fall to the rug and joined her dog, Tiger, in his close watching of a squirrel playing in a nearby tree. Then she tried to get the waiting laundryman to talk with her. But he spoke such a funny dialect that the children always made fun of the way he talked, and he preferred to keep quiet. Soon he tied the donkey to one of the trees and carried his big bundle of clean laundry up onto the veranda and into the house.

Looking about idly for something to do next, Tunu happened to catch sight of the donkey. Her eyes lit up with a flash. There was no one watching. Even the old gardener was out of sight, probably resting in the little toolshed. Quickly she untied the donkey and pulled it around to the back yard, intending to have a ride. But just then she heard her mother's voice. Alarmed, she looked for a place to hide the donkey. She realized that the laundryman would raise a big fuss as he searched for his animal, but presently he would give up and go home. Then, she told herself, I'll have plenty of time to ride the donkey as much as I please.

From his weekly visits to this house, the donkey was used to these children and their teasing ways. But today this charming little girl was acting so tender toward him that he thought she must be taking him to the barn to give him some of the delicious food they gave their pet stag. So he followed Tunu happily. Poor thing, little did he know what was in store for him!

Tunu led him all around but couldn't find a safe place to hide him. Time was running out. At any moment someone might catch sight of her and the donkey. Just then, at the far end of the courtyard, she noticed the outside door to the guest bathroom. Yes, the donkey would be quite safe there; no one would ever think of looking for a donkey in the guest bathroom.

Hurrying across the courtyard, she opened the door quietly, pushed the donkey inside, and quickly bolted the door from the outside. Then she ran back to the rug under the tree. The boys hadn't returned yet. She heaved a sigh of relief and, just as though nothing had happened, went on coloring the bird. How innocent she looked when they came back!

Suddenly a scream rent the air. It was the laundryman, who had just come out of the house with a big bundls of soiled clothes to take home and launder, and had found his

donkey missing. Dropping the clothes on the veranda, he ran about in all directions crying out for his dear donkey. But all his searching was in vain. Tunu of course swore she had no idea where the donkey was. She said she'd seen him break loose and go toward the forest. And, still screaming for his donkey, the laundryman went running off toward the forest.

For a moment peace returned to the house, but then an unexpected guest arrived. It was Mr. Ali, an old friend of their father's who stayed in one of their guest rooms whenever he came their way. He was a tall, thin man with a short, gray beard but no mustache, and he was going bald.

What a scurrying about his arrival caused! He was received warmly by their mother and shown into the best guest room—the one at the end of the courtyard.

Tunu was becoming more and more nervous. As soon as she saw Mr. Ali arrive, she could smell trouble. But what could she do? On the one hand, her mother and the servants were in the guest room, busily making it ready, and on the other, she couldn't escape from Safdar and her cousin. All that was left, then, was to hope and pray Mr. Ali wouldn't go to the bathroom too soon, not until she'd had time to get the donkey out of it.

As for the donkey, he sat peacefully in a corner of the dark bathroom, dreaming of the delicious meal he thought Tunu was bringing him.

Now, Mr. Ali was a very cleanly man. He always bathed twice a day, and today, after a tiring journey, he wanted a bath more than ever. So he got out fresh clothes, changed his shoes for some wooden clogs, and made straight for the bathroom. He entered the small dark room by the inner door, the one from the bedroom, and locked the door behind him.

It was very dark, but he knew the arrangement of the room

well and didn't bother with a light. He put his clean clothes on the stand and started toward the tub. But suddenly, through the gloom, he saw a sight he simply couldn't believe. Poor Mr. Ali—his heart all but stopped beating.

Meanwhile the donkey had continued daydreaming. When he had heard voices in the next room, he told himself happily: "There, they're getting my food ready." And then when the door opened, who should come in but a tall, scrawny fellow in wooden clogs. This was certainly no grass, no grain, no fodder. And by now the donkey had simply had enough. At the sight of the bald Mr. Ali, the long-suffering beast lost all control and jumped to his feet braying loudly.

Now, in the darkness Mr. Ali couldn't make out exactly what kind of animal it was that was threatening him. All he knew was that it was some huge, ugly creature letting out monstrous, strange cries. Completely unnerved, Mr. Ali yelled for help.

Leaving his clogs behind, he ran for the door, but in his confusion he went to the door Tunu had bolted from the outside. Struggle as he would, he simply couldn't open the door. How in the world could it be bolted from the outside when he'd just bolted it from the inside? His worst fears were confirmed. Surely there was some jinni or ghost at work!

The sound of Mr. Ali's shrieks and the donkey's frantic braying brought everyone running from all directions—the mother and the children and all the servants. What on earth could be the matter with Mr. Ali? Only Tunu knew what must be the trouble in the bathroom.

Mr. Ali felt sure it was a wolf that was attacking him. He heard a bucket roll over with a clang. Next the wash jug came flying at him. Not an ordinary wolf, for certain, but some monster of an evil spirit. Jumping over another bucket, he was trying to dodge his attacker, and he kept yelling and screaming for help at the top of his voice.

The servants were in the bedroom trying to break down the door, and the mother was standing just outside wringing her hands. Tiger the dog came running up barking loudly. For once the mother did not tell him to be quiet but said: "That's right, Tiger, go inside and see what's happening."

And it was Tiger who let the cat out of the bag. Instead of running into the bedroom, he ran around to the courtyard door that Tunu had bolted. There he began barking even more furiously.

Hearing all this new commotion—a mob pounding on one door and some huge beast slavering at the other—Mr. Ali thought more evil spirits had come to help their friend finish him off. His shrieking grew even louder, adding still more volume to the noise.

Tunu was both frightened and angry—angry at Tiger for giving her away. Her mother saw where the dog was pointing and quickly unbolted the bathroom door. As it flew open, a perspiring, terrified, open-mouthed Mr. Ali came charging out. Right on his heels came the laundryman's donkey. The two ran straight for the garden at breakneck speed, trampling the plants, overturning flowerpots. And on the donkey ran, quite sure that he could only escape from this madman by getting home to his village as quickly as possible.

The servants caught up with Mr. Ali in the garden, where he had given up out of breath. It was a long, long time before they could convince him that everything was all right. They kept explaining that it was only the laundryman's donkey who'd been in the bathroom with him. But how could the animal have gotten in there? Mr. Ali insisted that he must have come through the wall, since both the doors were locked. He remained quite convinced that it was an evil spirit in the form of a donkey who had attacked him in that bathroom.

Inside the house, the mother was sorting things out with

the children. She quickly understood who had done all the mischief, and for once her patience had reached its limit. You may be sure that Tunu got a spanking that she'll remember quite as long as Mr. Ali will remember being attacked by an evil spirit.

Translated by Shereen Khan
Illustrated by Mohammad Wasim

PHILIPPINES

The Happiest Boy in the World

by N. V. M. Gonzalez

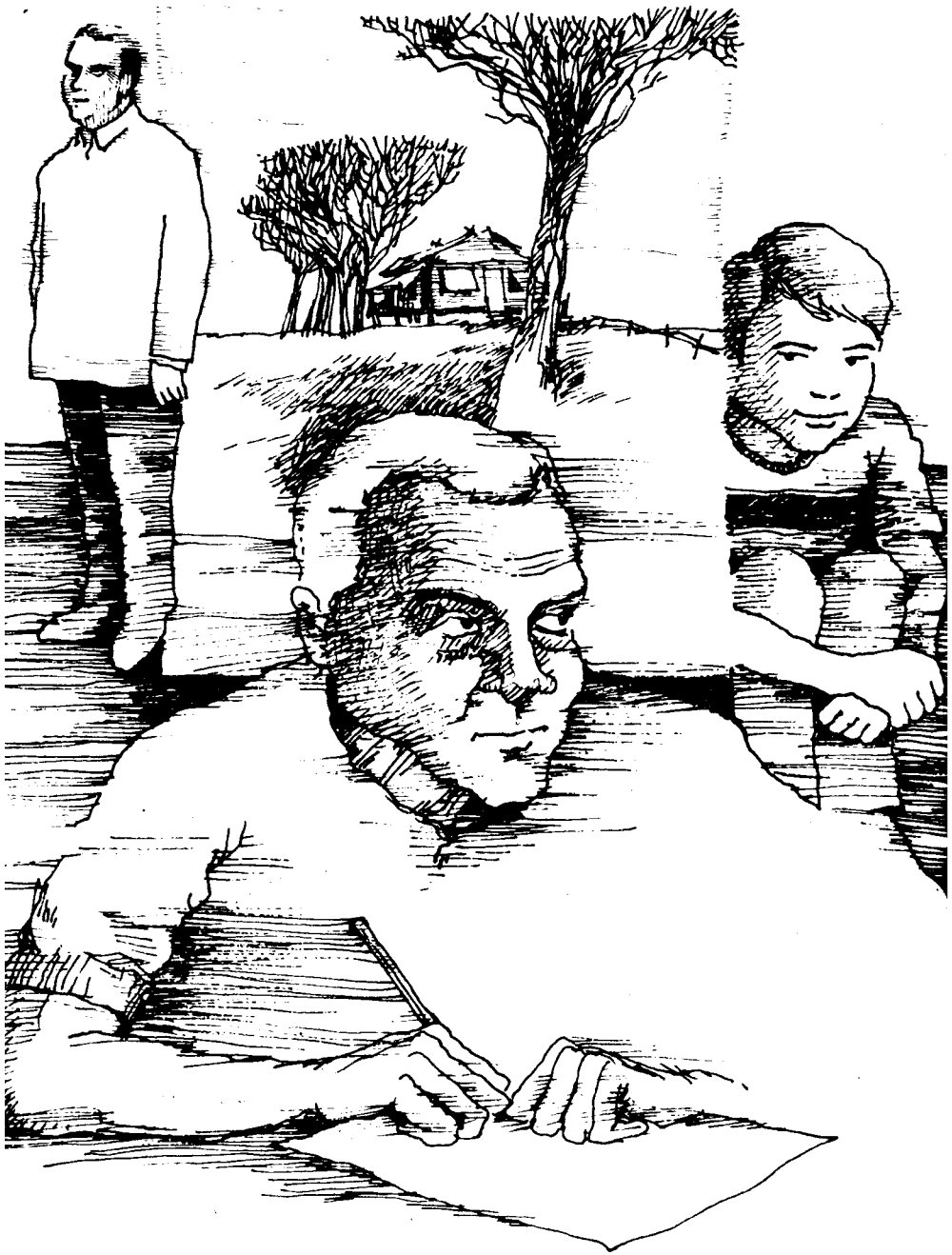
Editors' Note. The people of the Philippines speak a number of different languages, several words of which appear in this story. Carabao *is Visayan for water buffalo;* tatay *is Tagalog for father; and* compadre *is Spanish for good friend. The beginning of the story has been simplified somewhat, and here and there an explanatory phrase has been added for non-Filipino readers.*

One warm July night Julio was writing a letter to—of all people—his landlord, Ka Ponso. It was about his son José who wanted to go to school in Mansalay, the town where Ka Ponso lived.

They had moved here to the island of Mindoro about a year ago because Julio had been unable to find any land of his own to farm. As it was, he thought himself lucky when Ka Ponso agreed to take him on as a tenant.

"Dear Compadre," he started writing. A while before, his wife had given birth to a baby. Ka Ponso had happened to be in the neighborhood and offered to be the baby's godfather. After that they had begun to call each other compadre. Julio was writing in Tagalog, bending earnestly over a piece of paper torn out of his son's school notebook.

It was many months since he had had a writing implement in his hand. That was when he had gone to the municipal office in Mansalay to file a homestead application. Then he had used a pen and, to his surprise, had been able to fill in the blank form neatly. Nothing had come of the application,



although Ka Ponso had assured him he had looked into the matter and talked with the officials concerned. Now, using a pencil instead of a pen, Julio was sure he could make his letter legible enough for Ka Ponso.

"It's about my boy José," he wrote. "He's in the sixth grade now." He didn't add that José had had to miss a year of school since coming here to Mindoro. "Since he's quite a poor hand at looking after your carabaos, I thought it would be best that he go to school in the town."

He leaned back against the wall. He was sitting on the floor writing on one end of the long wooden bench that was the sole piece of furniture in their one-room house. The bench was in one corner. Across from it stood the stove. To his right, his wife and the baby girl lay under a hemp mosquito net. José too was here, sprawled beside a sack of unhusked rice by the doorway. He had been out all afternoon looking for one of Ka Ponso's carabaos that had strayed away to the newly planted rice clearings along the other side of the river. Now José was snoring lightly, like the tired youth he was. He was twelve years old.

The yellow flame of the kerosene lamp flickered ceaselessly. The dank smell of food, mainly fish broth, that had been spilled from many a bowl and dried on the bench now seemed to rise from the very texture of the wood itself. The stark fact of their poverty, if Julio's nature had been sensitive to it, might have struck him a hard and sudden blow; but as it was, he just looked about the room, even as the smell assailed his nostrils, and stared a moment at the mosquito net and then at José as he lay there by the door. Then he went on with his letter.

"This boy José, compadre," he wrote, "is quite an industrious lad. If only you can let him stay in your big house, compadre. You can make him do anything you wish, any

work. He can cook rice, and I'm sure he'd do well washing dishes."

Julio recalled his last visit to Ka Ponso's place about three months ago, during the fiesta. It was a big house with many servants. The floors were so polished you could almost see your own image under your feet as you walked, and there was always a servant who followed you about with a rag to wipe away the smudges of dirt that your feet left on the floor.

"I hope you will not think of this as a great bother," Julio continued, trying his best to phrase his thoughts. He had a vague fear that Ka Ponso might not regard his letter favorably. But he wrote on, slowly and steadily, stopping only from time to time to reread what he had written. "We shall repay you for whatever you can do for us, compadre. It's true that we already owe you for many things, but my wife and I will do all we can indeed to repay you."

Rereading the last sentence and realizing that he had mentioned his wife, Julio recalled that during the first month after their arrival here they had received five large measures of rice from Ka Ponso. Later he had been told that at harvest time he would have to pay back twice that amount. Perhaps this was usury, but it was strictly in keeping with the custom in those parts, and Julio was not the sort to complain. Besides, he never thought of Ka Ponso as anything other than his spiritual compadre, as they say, his true friend.

Suddenly he began wondering how José would act in Ka Ponso's house, unaccustomed as he was to so many things there. The boy might even stumble over a chair and break some dishes. . . . On and on went his thoughts, worrying about the boy.

"And I wish you would treat Jose as you would your own son, compadre. You may beat him if he does something wrong. Indeed, I want him to look up to you as a second father."

Julio felt that he had nothing more to say, that he had written the longest letter in all his life. For a moment the fingers of his right hand felt numb, and this was a funny thing, he thought, since he had scarcely filled the page. He leaned back again and smiled to himself.

Well, he had completed the letter. He had feared he would never be able to write it. But now he was done, and, it seemed, the letter read well. The next day he must send José off with it.

About six o'clock the following morning, a boy of twelve was riding a carabao along the riverbed road to town. He made a very puny load on the carabao's broad back. Walking close behind the carabao, the father accompanied him as far as the bend of the riverbed. When the beast hesitated to cross the small rivulet that cut the road as it passed a clump of bamboo, the man picked up a stick and prodded the animal. Then he handed the stick to the boy, as one might give a precious gift.

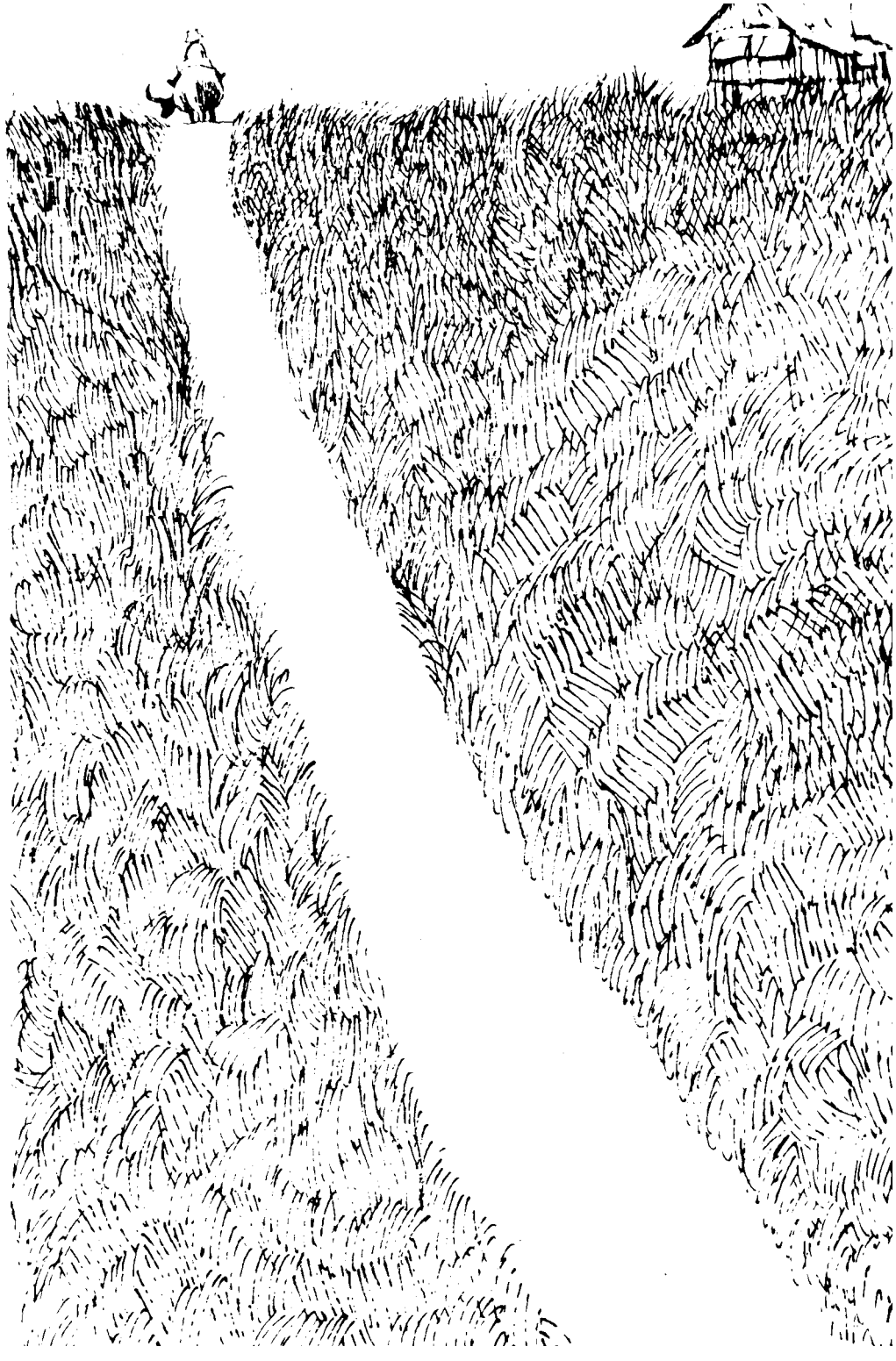
The father didn't cross the stream, but only stood there on the bank. "Mind that you take care of the letter," he called out from where he stood. "Do you have it there in your shirt pocket?"

The boy fumbled in his pocket. When he had found the letter, he called: "No, Tatay, I won't lose it."

"And take good care of the carabao," Julio added. "I'll come to town myself in a day or two to get it back. I just want to finish the planting first."

Then Julio started walking back home, thinking of the work that awaited him in his clearing that day. But he remembered something more to tell his son. Stopping, he called out to him again. "And that letter," he shouted. "Be sure and give it to Ka Ponso as soon as you reach town. Then be good and do everything he asks you to do. Remember—everything."

From atop the carabao, José yelled back: "Yes, Tatay,



yes," and rode on. Fastened to his saddle were a small bundle of clothes and a little package of rice. The latter was food for his first week in town. It was customary for schoolboys from the barrio or farm to provide themselves in this simple manner. In José's case, even if he was going to live at Ka Ponso's, Julio did not want it to be said that he had forgotten this little matter of the first week's food.

Now the boy was out of his father's sight, concealed by a stand of tall hemp plants, their green leaves glimmering in the morning sun. Thinking of his father, José grew suddenly curious about the letter in his shirt pocket. He stopped his carabao under a shady tree by the roadside. A bird sang in a bush close by, and José could hear it as he read the letter.

Jumping from word to word, he found it difficult to understand his father's dialect now that he saw it in writing. But as the meaning of each sentence became clear to him, he experienced a curious exultation. It was as though he was the happiest boy in the world and that bird was singing expressly for him. He also heard the tinkling of the stream far away. There he and his father had parted. The world seemed full of bird song and music from the stream.

Illustrated by Edgar Soller

SINGAPORE

A Cat to Remember

by Violet Wilkins

Editors' Note. This story had been slightly abridged by omitting a few episodes.

"Meow, meow." The weak cry came from a drain at the side of the street just as Yusuf was passing by. He stopped and listened. The cry came again: "Meow, meow."

Yusuf looked into the drain. A kitten, thin, gray with dirt, and very wet, looked up beseechingly at him. Yusuf reached down into the deep drain, picked the kitten up, and set it on the boards that covered half the drain. It just stood there,

looking very forlorn. "Poor little Puss," said Yusuf, "come, I'll take you home with me."

Yusuf's mother was not happy about the kitten. "You know, Yusuf, we've applied for a flat. You know that the regulations there forbid pets and that we can't take the cats with us. Already we have three of them to worry about when we move. How can we find four people to give them homes? It won't be easy, let me tell you."

But Yusuf begged so hard to keep the kitten that his mother finally gave in, with the warning: "But it won't be for always. Do you understand that?"

Yusuf promised that he himself would find a home for the stray when the time came. He fed it and then cleaned it. They were all surprised when they found that the kitten—Puss they called it—was snow white. Her eyes were a beautiful blue.

As the months passed, Yusuf grew fonder and fonder of Puss and pushed out of his mind the thought of moving to a flat. Perhaps they'd never get a flat, and he would be able to keep his pet.

Puss grew into a handsome creature with long silky hair and a fine straight bushy tail. She was not at all like their other three cats, which were short-haired and had kinks in their tails. Yusuf loved her more than he had ever loved any of the others.

There was great excitement when the family found that Puss was going to be a mother. They fussed over her and talked often of Puss and the kittens she was going to have.

It was quite a shock to Yusuf one day when he returned from school to find that they would soon be given a flat. What would become of Puss? What about her kittens?

His parents had to speak firmly. Puss definitely had to go. They'd take her to the SPCA, where they'd look after her and find homes for her and the kittens when they were born.

Yusuf listened but couldn't say a word. He felt like crying. He wanted to scream out that they couldn't take Puss away from him.

That night he tossed and turned in bed. When he finally fell asleep, he dreamed that Puss was in a cage meowing to be let out. She cried so sadly that he put his hand out to pet her and felt something soft. . . . He awoke. Puss was in bed with him, meowing quietly. Yusuf thought she knew about having to go and was trying to say that she wanted to stay with him.

Puss had never got into his bed before. She had always stayed in her straw bed in the toolshed when she was not prowling around. His mother would be annoyed if she knew, for she did not like the cats sleeping on the beds.

Snores were coming from the other rooms. Quietly Yusuf got out of bed, picked Puss up, and tiptoed to the front door. He opened it slowly, not making any noise, and put Puss out, whispering: "You be good now, Puss, and go to your shed."

Puss looked at him, hesitated, and then walked toward the toolshed.

On the way back to his room Yusuf glanced at the clock. It was a little past five. His mother would be up soon to cook breakfast. It was almost time for him to be up too, as he had to leave early for school. The school bus picked up him and his sister at seven.

He lay in bed thinking of his pet and wondering what he could do. Perhaps someone in his class at school would take Puss. All the children who had seen Puss had wanted her. But would they still feel the same when they knew she was going to have kittens? Well, he'd ask them, and if they said no, he'd have to think of something else. Puss must not be taken away to some place where he'd never see her again.

His eyelids began to droop. Just as he was dropping off to sleep the idea came to him. Of course, his grandmother's

old house! It had been vacant for more than two years. If nobody wanted Puss, that was where he would hide her. No one would ever think of going there.

Yusuf slept through the alarm that woke the family. His sister, Tina, shook him till he got up. He was still drowsy, and she said: "Hurry, it's nearly half past six. You'll make us late for the bus." Tina kept on complaining that they would be late, but Yusuf was finally ready two minutes before the bus arrived.

It was a long and noisy trip to school. Yusuf sat quietly in the back of the bus, unaware of the noises around him. He was thinking that he'd have to work fast. It was the last week of school, and he had to find out before the holidays began if anyone would take his pet.

Soon it was the last day of school. No one would take Puss, not even for a short while. Yusuf could not blame his classmates. Their problem was much the same as his. Many of them were moving into flats too and looking for homes for their own pets. The others had been warned not to bring home strays, as they might have to move shortly. The talk at school was mainly about pets and what to do with them when the move to a housing estate began.

So it had to be his grandmother's old house, and Yusuf put his plan into action. He went several times to the vacant house. It was a small wooden building fallen into disrepair. Boards were missing from it here and there. Attached to the house was a low lean-to with a dirt floor. His grandmother had stored firewood here. It had a single door, opening onto the garden, and one small window to let in light.

Yusuf thought the lean-to would be a good place for Puss. He cleaned it out and then rummaged around in the old house for anything he could find to make Puss comfortable. He got a box to hold the food he planned to store there, and in one corner he made a bed of straw and rags.

When he first started his preparations, Yusuf felt a little guilty, especially as the family had begun to notice his absences.

"Where do you go, Yusuf?" his sister asked one day. And his mother, who was nearby, spoke up too: "Yes, where *do* you go? You're always out of the house when I want you to do something."

After that, Yusuf was a little more careful. It was beginning to be fun preparing a home for his cat, and he made sure there was nothing for him to do around the house before he slipped away.

By now, taking a few spoonfuls at a time, he had collected more than half a can of powdered milk. He had not thought of it as stealing. He also made up his mind to use his own pocket money. If he could do without the sweets he was so fond of, he would save enough to buy two small cans of sardines a week. And he began thinking of ways of getting more powdered milk. He counted the money in his coin box. There was just enough to buy one large can. How long would that last? he wondered.

The time for moving to the flat was drawing near. In every room there were boxes and boxes tied firmly with rope. Mother had been working hard, and Father had been busy too, seeing to alterations in the flat.

Yusuf tried to get Puss used to her new home. He took her there several times, but she would not stay. One day he tried locking the door and leaving as quickly as he could, but when he arrived home by a roundabout route, Puss was already there waiting for him. He would have to shut the window as well when it was time for her to live in the storeroom. That was the only way Puss could have got out.

One Saturday, Mother announced they would be moving the following week. She had everything ready. Homes had been found for the three older cats, the flat had been scrubbed

clean, the curtains sewn, and the lampshades fixed. "Father will be on a long vacation from work and will see to things. He'll be taking Puss on Tuesday afternoon, Yusuf, so see that she's ready, will you?"

Yusuf didn't answer. He was wondering if he ought to take Puss to her new home on Monday night or Tuesday morning. Everyone would be too occupied, he hoped, to miss her.

Monday was a busy day. Yusuf spent the whole morning seeing to his personal belongings. After lunch his mother wanted him to help her in the new flat. He became restless when, from the flat's eighth-floor windows, he saw the sun setting and dusk falling.

It was dark when they reached home. Puss was there roaming from room to room, meowing sadly. Yusuf gave her a saucer of milk. When she had lapped it up and licked herself clean, she went up to him and licked his hands. He didn't like the roughness of her tongue, but he didn't draw his hands away. For the rest of the evening he stayed close to his pet, waiting for a chance to take her away, but it didn't come to him.

Tuesday morning was unusually cool, a fine day for getting work done. Yusuf's parents went early to the flat, and this gave him the chance he needed. He slipped out of the house carrying Puss, avoiding the road in case his parents should come back unexpectedly. Once inside the lean-to, he shut the window and the door before he let Puss go.

"There you are, Puss," he said, pointing to the corner, "a nice bed for you. Come on, this is your new home now. I'll have to leave you soon."

"Meow, meow." Puss rubbed herself against Yusuf's legs. He bent down and stroked her.

"Lie down, don't worry, you'll be all right. I'll come to see you whenever I can."

Puss curled up on her bed, watching him. When Yusuf

moved to the door, she didn't stir. She seemed to know she had to stay.

Yusuf arrived back home in good time and was busy working when his parents returned with box lunches. No one said anything about Puss, and Yusuf wondered when they would notice she was missing.

"Well, Yusuf, as soon as the washing up is done, we'll take Puss to the SPCA. You'd better bring the cloth she sleeps on. She'll be less likely to give trouble about settling down in her new home if she has it."

Yusuf was drying the last plate when he heard his father calling "Puss, Puss," and Tina's voice joining in. Yusuf was glad no one asked him to join in the hunt for Puss.

At a quarter past two, Father called off the search. "It's no use. We'd never be on time even if we found her now. I'll phone and explain."

Tina was upset. "What'll we do if we don't find her before we move? She doesn't know our new home."

"Don't worry. She's bound to come back here. I'll come every day to see if she's returned. All this noise and moving around may have upset her."

By that evening the family was in the new flat. Mother had insisted that they leave their old home spotlessly clean. There was so much to do that for the time being Yusuf didn't think about Puss.

The flat was well planned. There were three bedrooms, and Yusuf was delighted with his. It was small but cosy. By dinner time all the furniture was in place. There wasn't time for cooking, so the family went down to one of the eating stalls in the neighborhood.

Father taught them how to use the lift. He warned them about littering. The lift served a number of flats and had to be kept clean and in good order. He told them what to do if the lift should get stuck, as sometimes happened.

While they were eating, Yusuf remembered Puss. There was some fish left over from their meal, and he thought of taking it for his pet, but then he decided against it: his father might become suspicious and start asking questions.

Back at the flat, Father switched on the television set. Yusuf sat with the others to watch a Western. Though he liked such programs, he kept falling asleep till Father sent him to bed.

After breakfast the next morning, Yusuf said he was going for a walk to explore the neighborhood and hurried off to pay Puss a visit. There were many blocks of flats, and he hoped he wouldn't lose his way. It wasn't so far to his grandmother's old house.

When he arrived, Puss was meowing and scratching at the door. As soon as he entered, Puss sprang on him and began to lick him to show how pleased she was. He let her out, and they went for a short walk together, boy and cat. Then, because Puss was starting toward their old home, Yusuf picked her up and carried her back to the storeroom, where he gave her a saucer of milk and some sardines. Puss ate greedily and then, as always, cleaned herself carefully. Yusuf turned the straw and tidied her bed. When all was done, he looked in the box that held the provisions. He counted the cans to make sure there would be enough to last till he was back in school, when his father would give him extra pocket money and he could buy more provisions.

* * *

So it went on during school vacation. Yusuf visited Puss often and fed her well. The one thing that made him unhappy was his father's daily trip to their old home to see if Puss had returned there.

At breakfast the morning before school reopened, Father said that Puss would be having her babies soon. He hoped

that she had found a good place and perhaps someone to care for her, since she would be needing extra milk.

Yusuf hadn't thought about the extra milk. Perhaps now was the time to tell Father where the cat was. He almost did, but was afraid his parents would be angry with him.

One day, soon after the new school term began, Mother had to take Tina to the dentist after school. Yusuf hurried to see Puss. When he opened the door of the storeroom, he had a great surprise.

Puss was lying in her corner licking her kittens one at a time. There were three of them—white, thin, and not at all beautiful. They were unsteady and kept falling about as Yusuf watched them. He was disappointed in their appearance, but Puss purred happily. She lapped up every drop of the extra milk he gave her. The milk powder was almost finished, and Yusuf wondered what he would do if he couldn't save enough money for another can.

In school the next day Yusuf got into trouble several times with his teacher. He couldn't pay attention. How glad he was when the dismissal bell rang! He was ready to rush out of class when he heard the teacher calling him. "Yusuf, will you stay behind, please?"

When all the other children had gone, she said: "Come here, Yusuf. Now, tell me what's wrong. You didn't seem to be paying attention at all today. Do you miss your old home? Don't you like living in a flat?"

"It's all right."

"Well, then, are you worried about something? You seem very unhappy. Tell me."

Yusuf had expected the teacher to be cross with him, but when she wasn't, he hung his head and tears rolled down his cheeks.

"It's my cat."

"You miss your pet, is that it?"

Yusuf was too upset to say anything. His teacher waited till he had stopped crying and then patted him on the shoulder and said she hoped everything would turn out all right. "You're my best pupil, Yusuf, and you worried me a bit this morning."

Tina had been waiting for her brother outside; so they were both late in returning home, and their mother wanted to know why.

"I had to wait for Yusuf," said Tina. "He had to stay in after school."

"What's that?" Their father had come into the room just in time to hear Tina's remark. "What have you been doing, Yusuf?"

"Nothing, Dad."

"It can't be nothing if your teacher kept you in."

"She didn't really keep me in. She just wanted to talk to me."

"Oh, what about?"

"About . . . about . . ."

"Come on, out with it. What did your teacher want to talk to you about?"

Yusuf tried to think what to say. He could see from the look on his father's face that he'd better tell the truth.

"Teacher wanted to know what I was worried about. I hadn't been able to answer any questions in class."

"And why not? What's wrong with you, anyway? Don't you like living in a flat?"

Frightened as Yusuf was, he couldn't help being surprised that both his father and his teacher should think it was the flat that was the cause of the trouble. And in a way it was. If not for the flat, there'd be no problem about Puss. And yet he knew that the family was much better off living in the fine new flat than in their old, rundown house.

"What did you tell your teacher? What excuse did you make?" Father didn't give him a chance to answer. "What did you say was worrying you?"

"Puss."

"What?"

"Puss."

"You can't work in school because you're worried about Puss? But you know I'm doing everything I can to find her. She must be getting food from somewhere; otherwise she'd come home."

"Dad, Puss is at Grandmother's old house."

"How do you know?"

"I put her there. I've been looking after her there."

"You—" Father looked very angry, but Yusuf was no longer afraid. Now that he'd told them his secret, he felt better. And Father too calmed down. "We must make arrangements tomorrow," he said.

"Puss has kittens—three of them."

Before Father could say anything, Tina rushed up to him and tugged at his arm. "Please, Dad, let's go and see them, please."

Mother went quietly to the kitchen to get some milk. In a short time all four of them were at Grandmother's old house. Puss purred happily when she saw them. Both children and parents made a great fuss over Puss and her kittens.

Yusuf kept waiting for the scolding, but it did not come. On the way home, Father was quiet. It was only when they were back in the flat that he said: "Now we have four homes to look for."

"Dad, can't we keep just one of the kittens?"

"No, Tina, you know the rules. But we'll go every day to feed them."

Father kept his word. The nicest time every day was when the family visited Puss and the kittens. Yusuf dreaded the time when homes would be found for them, but he knew it had to be soon. The kittens were growing up fast—already they were as beautiful as their mother—and the storeroom was too small for them.

The day Father told them he had found homes for all the cats, Tina cried. Yusuf felt like crying too.

"Would you like to come along when I take Puss and the kittens to their new homes?"

"Tina can go. I don't want to."

On the Sunday when Puss and her kittens were taken away, Yusuf stayed out of the flat. He roamed around the housing estate, not wanting to know where Puss was going, not wanting to hear Tina crying. He felt sad to think that he might never again see his pet. Yet he was glad that people living in flats couldn't keep pets. This meant they could never have another: no animal could ever take Puss's place.

Toward evening Yusuf thought he'd better go home. His parents would be worried if he stayed out too late. He went

up to their floor in the lift and then walked along the passage to their flat. The others were at home. He could hear them talking as he reached the door. They turned toward him when he walked in. Nobody spoke, but Yusuf knew they were feeling sorry for him.

He walked to his room. He stood still in the doorway and stared. Then he gave a shout of joy.

"Puss! How lovely!"

There, on the wall, hung a framed life-size colored photograph of Puss and her three fluffy kittens that his father had had taken. And, when he looked on the back, there were the four addresses of the cats' new homes. He could go to visit them whenever he wanted, and in the meantime there was always the lovely, lovely picture to remind him of Puss and her kittens. He'd have it for always and always.

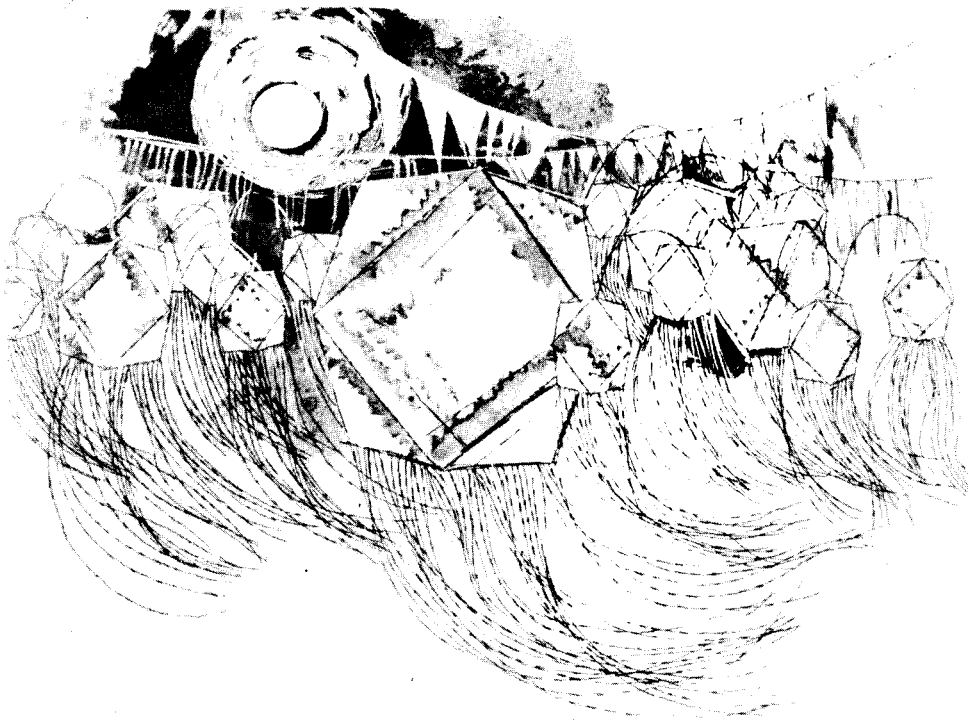
Illustrated by Chin Oi Tow

SRI LANKA

A Lantern as Big as a House

by Sybil Wettasinghe

The festival of Vesak takes place in May, at a time when the full moon seems to shine with special brightness and splendor. It is a feast in honor of the Lord Buddha, and people's hearts are filled with fervor as they flock to their temples to honor him. They bring offerings of milk-and-rice gruel and long thin sticks of fragrant incense. They also bring heaps of flowers, and, as they place them on the altar, they chant the Lord's teaching over and over: "Just as these lovely flowers must fade away, so too must our lives end. Just as these lovely flowers . . ."

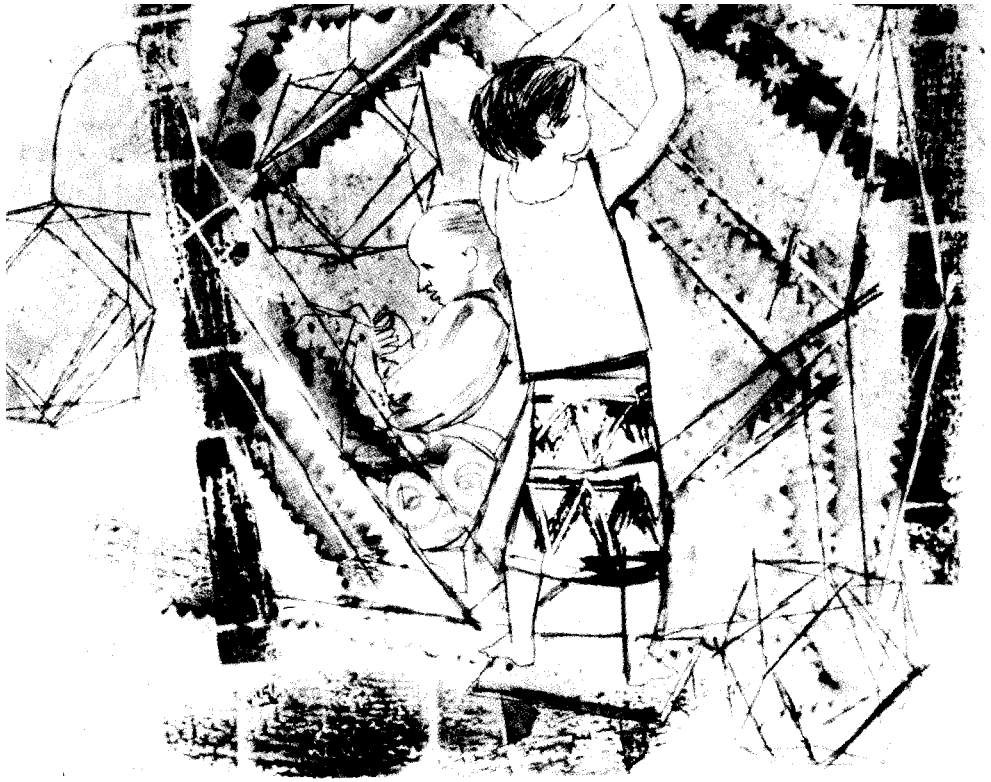


Some people observe the first day of the holy festival by meditating and fasting from the afternoon until sunrise of the next day. Others listen to the monks deliver sermons on the teachings of Buddha. And still others give alms to those less fortunate than themselves, so that the poor enjoy a rare feast during the festival of Vesak.

At sundown on this first day many, many lights of various colors begin twinkling in homes everywhere. These are lanterns lit to celebrate the festival of Vesak, commemorating three events in the life of the Lord Buddha—the day of his birth as Prince Siddhartha, the day he attained Enlightenment and became a Buddha, and the day he died and passed into Nirvana, or eternal peace. Thus is the Buddha remembered with deep devotion: people rejoice at his birth, venerate his name, and strive to follow in his footsteps.

And thus it was that in preparation for Vesak a young boy was making his festive lantern. He had traded a gourd from his grandmother's vegetable garden for some strips of bamboo, and now he was busily tying the strips together to form the diamond-shaped framework of the lantern. He wanted to make a big, big lantern, just like the ones he had seen in the city last year when he and his grandmother had gone with some neighbors to see the festival illuminations there. Some of the lanterns had seemed as big as houses, and the boy had been unable to forget them.

There were now only twenty days before Vesak began, and all the villagers, young and old alike, were busy making preparations. Families worked together in large groups, making the clusters of small lanterns that would create such a gorgeous sight on the first night of Vesak. The young children especially wanted their family's lanterns to be the best in the village, and they worked away excitedly with their older sisters and brothers. But the boy who wanted to make a



lantern as big as a house had to work all alone. He had no brothers and sisters to help him. He had only his old grandmother, with whom he lived in a tiny mud house.

Granny loved him dearly. He had come to live with her while he was still a small baby, and she had raised him with all the tenderness and care in the world. She still called him Patiya, which means "baby."

Granny sold vegetables to earn a living, growing them in a small garden behind the house. It was tiring work, and she was glad when Patiya became old enough to help her. He was only ten years old now, but already he worked like a man, pulling weeds and turning soil, watering plants and gathering manure for fertilizer. He also went to school. He wanted to learn figures to help Granny keep accounts, and he read to

her from his schoolbooks. Each Sunday, early in the morning they went to the market fair to buy and sell—to buy their few necessities and sell their vegetables. They were a happy pair, busy old Granny and her lively little Patiya.

Granny worked and worked, all day, every day. And it was Patiya who added the spice to their work. He made a gong to frighten birds away from their garden and dressed up a scarecrow to put on the fence. And he made some flower beds in their front yard. He also made kites and pop guns for his own amusement. Granny smiled when he worked beside her. She often called him her industrious little man. And when she saw him start building the huge Vesak lantern, she laughed and said: "Why, it's as big as a house! We could live in it, couldn't we?"

Patiya worked on his lantern every afternoon, and the children of the neighborhood came to watch. Soon the news of his mammoth lantern spread far and wide, and children came from all over to see Patiya's work.

"How will you be able to hang such a giant?" they asked him.

"I don't mean to hang it," replied Patiya confidently. "I'll leave it standing right here."

The bamboo framework stood on the tiny mud-paved porch of their house. It grew and grew until it completely filled the porch, and they had to creep through the framework to get in their house through the front door.

Six days before Vesak, Patiya finally finished the framework. Sitting back to admire it, he was struck by a thought. How could they afford enough paper to cover such a huge lantern? Worrying about this, he went to see how his friends' lanterns were progressing. Most of their masterpieces had already been given their finishing touches. There they stood, inside the houses, like ladies dressed up and waiting to go to a wedding. And he thought of his bare framework at home,

blocking the front door. He walked sadly home, and there the framework stood, looking like a poor beggar woman who would look beautiful if only he could attire her in fine clothes.

It was noon. He went to the kitchen looking for Granny. She was blowing the cooking fire under the rice pot, and hot foam was just beginning to bubble between the pot and its lid.

"I've been a fool, Granny," he began.

"Why, my treasure?" Granny asked, turning to look at him.

Tears brimmed in Patiya's eyes. He said: "We won't have enough paper to cover the lantern."

"Oh, yes, we will," Granny said. "There'll be plenty of paper, never you fear."

Patiya's eyes grew big and round. Then Granny explained what she meant: "Tomorrow is Saturday, and we'll dig up the sweet potatoes. On Sunday we'll sell them at the market. And then—" She paused, and Patiya's face began to glow. The tears twinkled on his cheeks, and a smile came through. "And then we'll bring home the rainbow!" she sang.

So on Saturday they dug up a large harvest of sweet potatoes, which they sold on Sunday for a good price. Leaving the market, Patiya was filled with joy. Already he could imagine how his lantern would look all lit up on Vesak night. Looking at Granny, he saw a smile playing hide-and-seek on her face.

The bazaar shops were showing their special wares for Vesak in a concert of color. Brightly colored papers and tinsel, festoons, paper caps and masks, bunting, paper flags, and piles and piles of bucket-shaped lanterns.

Patiya walked proudly into a shop and bought all he needed for decorating his lantern. Then they went home.

Soon after lunch, Granny lay down for a nap. It had been a tiring day for her. Patiya brought out the sheets of new, smooth colored paper. Then he got out Granny's old pair of

scissors. But somehow he couldn't bring himself to make the first cut: he was afraid something might go wrong. If he made a mistake and ruined the paper, he knew they couldn't afford to buy more. There were just four days left before Vesak, and he kept worrying and worrying.

After Granny had got up and was going about her many chores and preparations, she noticed that no progress had been made on the lantern. "You'd better hurry, Patiya," she said. "There's not much time left."

Finally Patiya told her what was worrying him. Granny agreed that they couldn't buy more paper. She thought for a while and then agreed to help him cut the paper and paste it on the lantern. But first she must finish washing and cleaning the whole house, rubbing the crockery with ash and soap, soaking the mats and scrubbing them with coconut husks, washing all the clothes and linen, and cooking extra food so she could meditate all the first day of Vesak.

So it wasn't until the last day before the festival that she could help him. But they began working on the lantern early in the morning. It was harder work than they had expected. Granny had long forgotten how to make Vesak lanterns, and Patiya had never learned. But Patiya remembered how the city lanterns had looked, and Granny thought of her own childhood lanterns, over half a century past. Thoughts came rolling back to her over the years—the easy way to cut the flower patterns, how best to cut the long frilly "tails."

On and on they worked. There was not room enough on the small porch for the lanterns and two persons. So Granny got inside the framework and sat on the floor, cutting out the paper. Patiya stood on a chair outside and pasted the pieces of paper on the framework.

By sundown the lantern was still incomplete. Granny went in to prepare supper, while Patiya worked more and more

desperately. "Tomorrow's the beginning of Vesak," he told himself, "and Granny will spend the day meditating at the temple."

After supper, they worked into the night, but still they couldn't finish. Patiya tried to console himself with the thought that he could finish covering the lantern with paper by himself the next day and that even if there wasn't time for the other decorations, still the lantern would look pretty enough. But all the same he went to bed that night feeling very unhappy.

Imagine his surprise the next morning when Granny didn't start for the temple before dawn as she usually did each Vesak day. To remind her, Patiya said: "People are already on their way to the temple."

"I hear them, son," she said. "But I won't go alone this year: we'll go together."

"But you have to meditate," said Patiya.

For an answer Granny took the boy's little round head in both her gnarled hands and said: "A good grandmother must always do her duty."

The rising sun bathed everything in its soft light. Patiya and his grandmother set out for the temple. They fell into the stream of people carrying flowers, and rice gruel and joss sticks. And when they reached the temple, they joined in the offering ceremony. Then they prayed wholeheartedly and started homeword.

How bright and joyous was the day! There was excitement in the air. People everywhere were putting up Vesak decorations, which were swinging gently, lightly in the breeze. The whispering rustle of tissue paper made Patiya gaze longingly at the decorations.

Granny walked faster and faster, and once they were home, she hurried him through breakfast. Then she stepped inside the half-finished lantern, and they both resumed work.

By noon the lantern was turning out to be a thing of beauty. The passers-by on the road could see only Patiya at work and remarked on how clever he was to do all this by himself. Inside the lantern Granny kept cutting out paper flowers and trimming. Patiya kept taking them from her by reaching into the top of the lantern and pasting them on the lantern the way he thought they looked best. The lantern they were making was white and blue and red with white and blue and red tinsel.

After a hurried lunch, they went to work again. Granny worked swiftly and silently, and Patiya sang bits of song now and then. Their fingers moved more briskly, cutting, gluing, pasting. Granny had no other thought but to get the lantern ready for lighting at sunset. She would cut a length of paper, fold it just a bit, cut a queer shape, and out would come some lovely design that Patiya would take and fix to the lantern.

On and on they worked till the sun began to go down. Soon it would be night. But tonight it would not be all darkness. To adorn the night there would be gems of light in all directions.

The temple bell rang, and a drum began to sound. It was time for the evening ceremony. Patiya looked around and saw blobs of colored light moving out of the houses. Slowly the lanterns moved in all directions and soon fell into a regular pattern and shone brightly.

The last bit of trimming went into place. Patiya stood up. His radiant face was aglow with joy. "Click! click!" went Granny's scissors inside the lantern. She was still cutting trimming.

"Stop, Granny, stop," called Patiya gleefully. "The lantern is finished!"

"With the help of Lord Buddha . . ." began Granny. Then she fell silent. After a moment she wailed: "But, Patiya! Patiya-a-a! how can I get out? You've pasted me in."

In his excitement Patiya had indeed closed the last opening, the one that was being left for Granny's exit.

"Oh, Granny! whatever are we to do? We just can't tear the paper now," Patiya pleaded.

"Now, don't worry, my precious," Granny called from inside the lantern. "All problems have solutions. Throw me the matches, and I'll light the candles."

Patiya fetched the box of matches. He could have lit the candles himself by reaching down from the hole at the top, but since Granny was inside, he threw the box in to her, and Granny lit the candles one by one until the lantern glowed with a brilliant, mellow light.

"Aren't you happy, son?" she called. But before Patiya could answer, she went on: "As for me, I'm happy, too, because there's still time for me to do what I always do on Vesak night." Then she quoted some words of the Buddha's: "If by renouncing some little pleasure a wise man can derive greater pleasure, let him renounce his little pleasure for the greater one."

Patiya did not quite understand, but he knew that Granny was happy, filled with a joy beyond his understanding.

Now a plate of gold was rising in the eastern sky. It was the full moon riding high in the heavens to take part in the Vesak celebrations. And it seemed as though this queen of the night had left her gem-studded crown on earth. And the diamond in the crown had rolled onto a tiny mud-paved porch, where a little boy stood gazing at its beauty.

Against one side of the lantern there appeared the shadow of an aged woman in deep meditation.

Surely this was the grandest Vesak lantern of them all. All the villagers came to see it some time during that night. They came from far and near. They came till after midnight. And they stood in silence watching the lovely sight, the glowing lantern and the meditating shadow from within it.

The moon shone serenely overhead. Clouds moved gently across its face. There was peace.

Then ever so slowly the lantern began to dim. The candles were burning out one by one. Quietly, ever so quietly, Granny tore open a side of the lantern and stepped out. And there was Patiya, asleep beside the lantern, his face full of contentment. Perhaps, even in his dreams, he could still see that lantern as big as a house.

Illustrated by Somasiri Herath

THAILAND

The Egg-breaking Champion

by Manop Kaewsanit

"Juke, aren't you going to the fair this evening?" Mother asked late one afternoon.

"Of course I'm going, Mother. After all, the temple fair comes only once a year."

"And this year the fair is quite special, you know," Mother said. "There're all kinds of shows—movies and singing troupes and folk opera, and even shadow puppet plays. Why, there won't be time enough to see them all."

"How long does the fair last?"

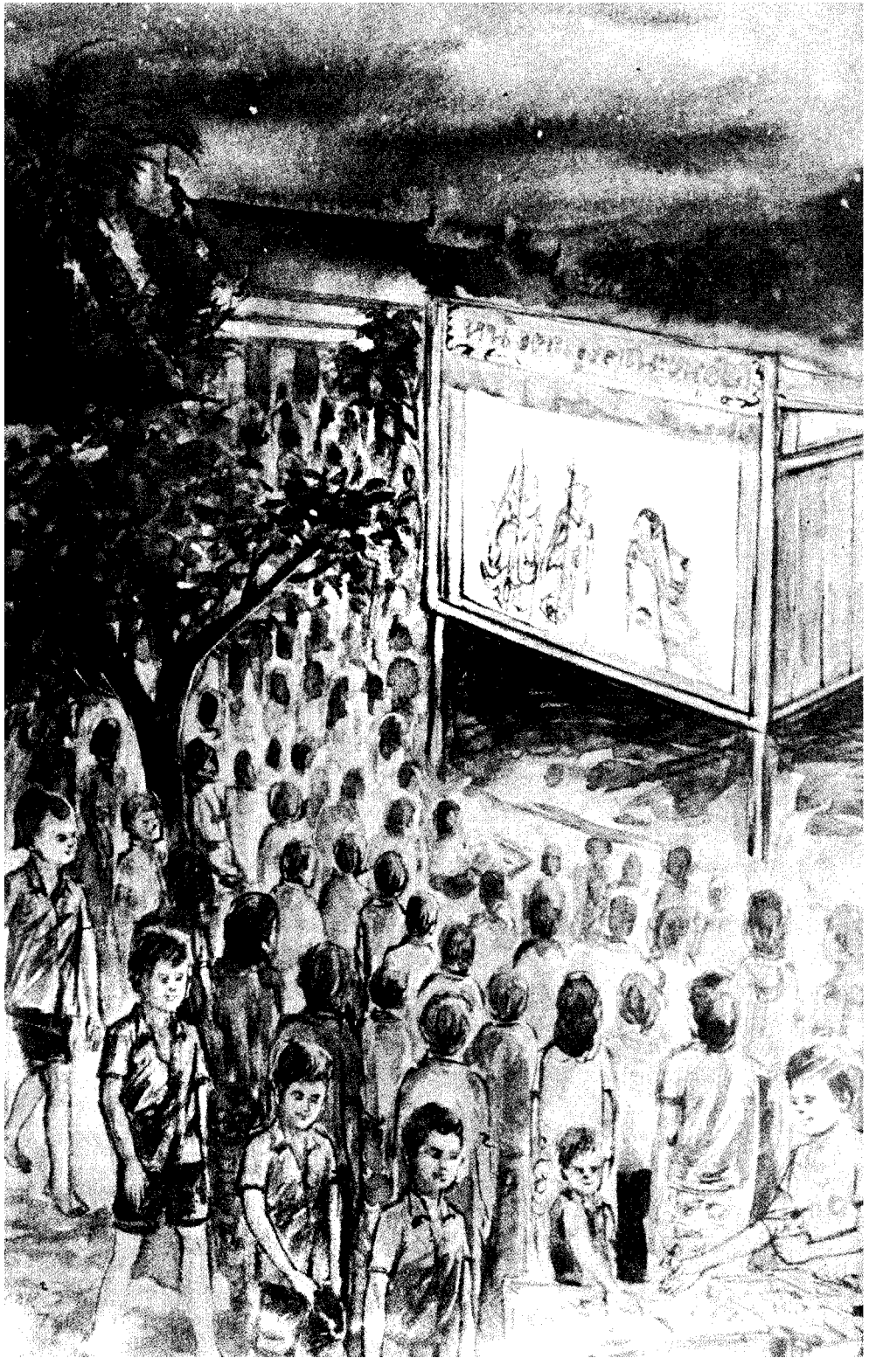
"Three days, I think," Mother said. "And what are you so busy doing there?"

"I'm boiling an egg for the egg-breaking game at the fair."

Already Juke was thinking what it would be like. The temple compound would be very lively. Great throngs of people would come, not from their village alone but from other villages nearby, all dressed up in their best clothes and finery —necklaces, earrings, and all kinds of other gold ornaments. The temple fair was a good chance to show off one's possessions. After all, it's not often that one has such an opportunity. And the boys would bring duck eggs from home or buy them at the fair to play the egg-breaking game.

Soon it began to get dark. Putting his boiled egg carefully in his pocket, Juke went to meet his friends, whose names were Saeng, Koon, and Jorm. The four of them went to the temple.

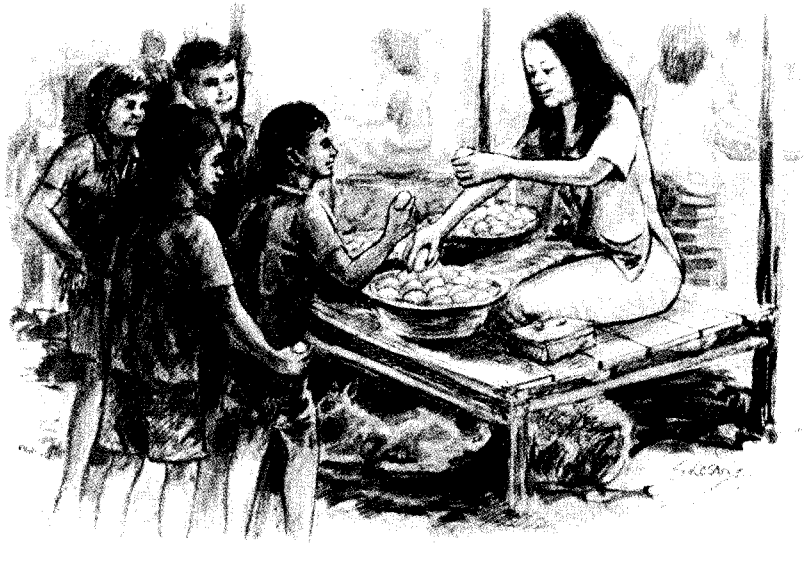
For a while they just walked around the compound, en-



joying the sights and the bustle. They stopped to see a Manora dance that was just about to start. The dancers were supposed to be very good, and their performances always attracted many spectators, most of whom brought with them straw mats that they spread on the ground in front of the stage for their seats.

After watching the dancing awhile, the four friends moved on to see a shadow-puppet play. Most of the audience here was made up of older people, and the boys didn't stay long. Somehow they seemed to be thinking of something besides plays and dances, and they kept walking around.

Presently they reached the stall that had boiled duck eggs for sale. This was the place they'd been aiming for all the time. Here many other young boys and children were crowding around the bowls of hard-boiled eggs, waiting their chance to buy. Were they all that hungry? Not a bit: the eggs were not for eating but were rather for the egg-breaking game, a kind of contest, a betting game for children using eggs in-



stead of money. Two contestants would each take an egg and hit them against each other. Usually one egg would be cracked, while the harder egg would stay whole. And the boy with the whole egg would win the cracked egg from his opponent. Occasionally both eggs would be cracked, and then the game would be a draw, each boy keeping his own egg.

"Come on," Jorm said, "let's get eggs and start the game."

"How much are the eggs?" Koon asked the stall owner.

"Only one baht each," answered the woman.

The boys tried to choose the hardest eggs with the thickest shells. They examined many eggs closely before making their

choices, and finally each boy bought the egg that looked best to him. Everyone picked an egg except Juke, who had brought his own egg from home.

"Come on, Juke," said Jorm, "I want to have a try against that egg of yours."

"All right, but who'll be bottom egg?"

"I will," said Jorm. So he placed his egg carefully in one hand, with the big round end up and held it out to Juke.

Juke grasped his egg firmly, with the big end down. "Here goes!" he cried, raising his egg in the air. Then he brought it down hard on top of Jorm's egg.

There was a sharp "Crack!" as one egg broke. Looking quickly, the boys saw that it was Juke's egg that had broken.

"Hooray!" shouted Jorm, waving his egg in the air. He was the winner, and he took Juke's broken egg as his prize.

Turning to his other friends, Jorm said: "And who'll challenge me next?"

"I will," shouted Saeng, holding up the egg he'd chosen. "Just look! See how greenish my shell is? That means it's mighty hard. It'll break your egg for sure."

"All right," said Jorm, "Just let's see. You be bottom egg."

So Saeng held his egg out. Smiling, Jorm stroked his egg lovingly and then brought it down hard on Saeng's egg.

"Crack!" And it was Jorm's egg that was broken.

"Ha!" cried Saeng gleefully, taking Jorm's egg. "I told you mine was better."

Juke bought another egg from the stall owner, and for a time the four friends kept playing the game. Nobody won or lost very much, but they kept buying new eggs and gradually accumulated quite a lot of broken eggs that they'd won from each other. Finally, gathering up all their broken eggs, they went to a food stall and had a delicious meal of rice, curry, and boiled eggs.

When they were ready to make their separate ways home

they agreed they'd all bring their own eggs from home and meet at the fair next evening to continue their game.

Late the next afternoon Juke built a fire in the yard and started boiling his egg. He was so absorbed in the process that his father asked: "What on earth are you doing, Juke?"

"Boiling an egg for the egg-breaking game this evening."

His father laughed softly, casting his mind back to the days of his youth when he himself had been an eager player of the same game. Now, he loved Juke dearly, always looking after him and teaching him with loving care what he ought to know. His dearest wish was that Juke should grow up to be a good man. So at this moment he was filled with hope that Juke would win the game that evening. He asked: "Do you think you have a good chance of winning?"

"I'm not too sure, Father. Last night I lost my very first egg."

"Shall I tell you how to win?"

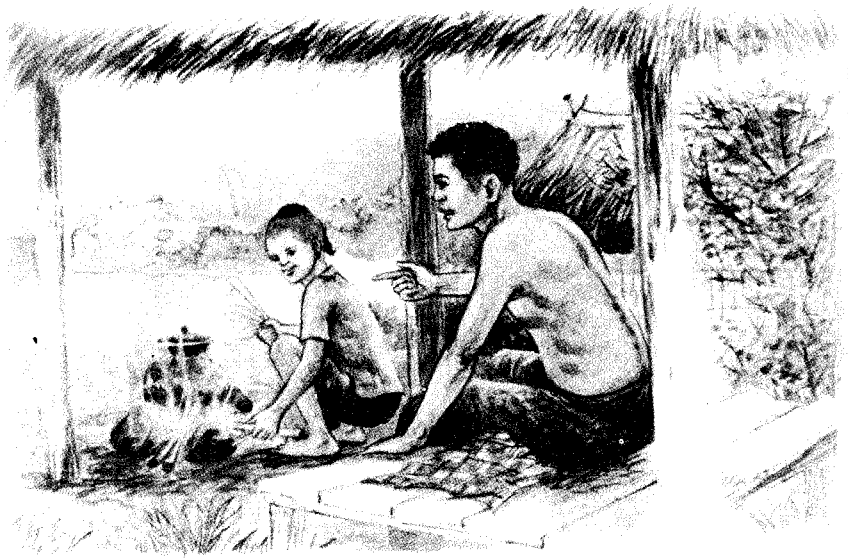
"What, Father?"

"When I was a boy I used to play this game, too. Whenever there was a village gathering, we boys would take boiled eggs along. It was really great fun in those days because we played against boys from other villages, too. Sometimes I would win dozens of eggs in one evening."

"You must have had some secret, Father," Juke said excitedly. "What was it? Tell me."

"The secret is in the way you boil the egg. If you want your egg to be tough, not brittle, you must boil it for a long, long time. Keep it boiling as long as you can, and the shell will become hard as rock. Of course, it won't be very good to eat later, but you'll win so many other eggs that you won't care about that. Take my advice, and I promise you'll be the champion this evening."

That evening Juke met his friends at the egg stall. "Well, now, Jorm," he said, "I'm ready for a return match."



"Sure," said Jorm. "If you think you're so smart, you can certainly have a try. But let me warn you that I have something pretty good here."

So the game began again. Juke was bottom egg. Again came the "Crack!" and Juke's face was wreathed in a broad grin: his egg had won this time. Jorm looked quite put out, because he had been so confident of winning.

"Who'll challenge me next?" said Juke, looking around at his friends.

"Me," said Koon, taking an egg out of his pocket.

Once more Juke's egg was on the bottom, and again Juke won. He went on playing with other friends from his village, winning many, many eggs. Finally he felt so bold that he decided to challenge someone from a different village.

"Hey, big brother, how about having a go with me?" he said to an older boy from a nearby village.

This boy had been playing the game with friends all even-

ing and winning constantly. Evidently he was an old and skilled hand at the game. "Delighted," he said, taking Juke's egg and weighing it in his hand. Then he said: "Well, it feels heavy enough, but mine's harder."

"Let me be top egg, please, big brother?"

"All right," said the older boy holding out his egg.

Juke lost no time. Down came his egg, and there was an usually loud "Crack!" How the faces of Juke and his friends fell when they saw that his egg was broken. But in a moment they all starting smiling again: the older boy's egg was broken too. So the game was a draw, and neither boy lost his egg.

The older boy smiled, patted Juke on the shoulder, and said: "We two are the champions tonight, and you're just as good as I am, young brother. But you can have my egg, because you're really one of the best egg breakers anywhere."

How proud Juke felt. Walking in front of all his friends, he led them to the eating stall and shared his eggs with them all. Everyone kept asking Juke what his secret was, but he only smiled knowingly and shook his head.

As he walked home that night, still smiling, he told himself: "Father's secret really works." And he went to bed that night thinking of all the egg-breaking games he'd play in days to come. Thanks to his father, he'd be the champion of the countryside; he was sure of it.

Translated by Napa Bhongbhibhat
Illustrated by Surasak Dusdinthorn

The Contributors

Afghanistan

Ahazam Rahnaward Zaryab is one of the best-known writers in Afghanistan. He is also president of the cultural department of the Ministry of Information and Culture.
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Burma

Gayetni (U Ye Myint) has published numerous articles, stories, and novels. He is now associated with the Ministry of Information.
U Sein's works have appeared in many publications. He has studied extensively in Europe.

India

Vallikkannan is a free-lance writer who has also translated Russian literature into Tamil.
R. K. Laxman's political cartoons have been appearing in the *Times of India* for over thirty years.

Indonesia

Jusran Safano's careers have taken him into journalism, forestry, and film making. He has written many pieces of fiction.
Oesman Effendi's works have been exhibited throughout the world.

Iran

Cyrus Tahbaz has long worked to publish Iranian avant-garde literature. Presently he is an editor and designer of children's books.
Nikzad Nojoumi's illustrations have been used for a variety of children's books.

Japan

Nankichi Niimi, who died in 1942, has gained much posthumous fame for his nursery rhymes and stories.
Teikichi Miyoshi's illustrations have appeared in both Japanese and foreign-language books.

Korea

O Yong-su is an award-winning author who now edits a literary magazine.
Kim Young-ju is a Western-style painter whose works have been widely exhibited.

Malaysia

Ismail Ahmad has worked as a teacher and researcher, in addition to writing children's stories and book reviews.
Othman bin Haji Zainudin is a book designer and illustrator.

Nepal

Madhav Ghimire has long worked to promote Nepalese literature.
Tek Bir Mukhiya is a self-taught artist and chief designer for the Nepal Association of Fine Arts.

Pakistan

A prolific author, Anwar Enayetullah writes in both Urdu and English.
Mohammad Wasim is an artist-cartoonist.

Philippines

N. V. M. Gonzales is Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of the Philippines.
Edgar Soller is one of the most popular artists in the Philippines.

Singapore

Violet Wilkins is a teacher and well-known writer of children's stories.
Chin Oi Tow is famous as an illustrator and book designer.

Sri Lanka

Sybil Wettasinghe is a journalist and award-winning writer of children's stories, as well as being accomplished in batik art.

Somasiri Herath has had his art work exhibited many times and is now active as a book designer.

Thailand

Manop Kaewsanit's love of children and rural life has been the subject of many of his writings.

Surasak Dusdinthorn's art has appeared in numerous children's books.

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